Dissent

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RE-IMAGINING GLOBALIZATION

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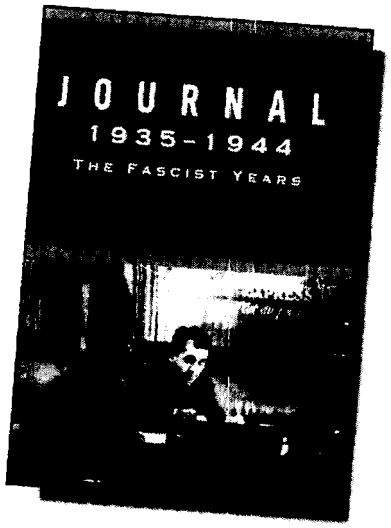

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Editor's Page

"The people have spoken," said James A. Baker the Third, after George Bush's dubious Florida victory (of .009 percent) was certified (by his campaign co-chair there). Not mentioned: Al Gore's 325,000 national plurality. Can one express more contempt of democratic citizenship? Well, yes. When Florida's Supreme Court backed recounts, Congressman Tom Delay assailed it for violating "the trust of the people of Florida in an attempt to manipulate the results of a fair and free election." Not mentioned: Florida's uncounted votes. The raw pursuit of power by the Republicans compares only to their pursuit of Bill Clinton. ■ *Dissent* magazine, a quarterly, cannot keep up with events. We try to reflect on them; so expect some serious scrutiny of America's political state in our next issue. (Had the elections ended "normally" we would have run a small symposium in this issue.) Still, one can hazard a few comments. ■ Facile "authorities" will soon tell us that "in the end the system worked." We should pose hard questions instead—about the political culture, about how elections work, about the roles of money and the media in them, about the nonvoting half of the electorate. ■ Do the elections represent convergence on the "center" or deep division within? "New Democratic" centrism dominated the last eight years. The left was troubled, rightly, by the Clinton-Gore welfare reform and a trade policy that was indistinguishable from the policies of Bush the First. Where does the third way lead? Out of the woods or from Bush to . . . Bush? Given New Democratic claims, Gore should have won easily. ■ What were left options in 2000? One was a "left wing of the possible," as Michael Harrington used to call it—a coalition of labor, minorities, feminists, and environmentalists within the Democratic Party. A Gore presidency could be tugged left if indebted to this coalition. (He carried Michigan thanks to 63 percent of union and 92 percent of African-American voters.) ■ This strategy assumed that another attempt at a third party would fail. It assumed Gore and Bush were not interchangeable. A growing conservative majority on the Supreme Court augers bad things for abortion and civil rights. And what of Bush appointees to the National Labor Relations Board? ■ Ralph Nader's alternative candidacy miscarried. The Greens hoped to win 5 percent. They failed, split the center-left, and delivered electoral votes to Bush. Nader insisted that "there is no difference between Gore and Bush." Don't blame us if Bush wins, echoed supporters. In short, the left should make no distinctions and not be accountable for its choices. Gore's the spoiler, not me, Nader said after the elections. Sure—if the voice of "the people" was certified in Florida. ■ To be an "alternative," especially a left alternative, your starting point must be "a decent respect to the opinions" of American citizens.

M.C.

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A Word to Our Readers

As we go to press, it seems certain that George W. Bush will be the next president of the United States. The next four years will be filled with bitter political conflict, with a steady tilt to the right.

The right has long understood the role of intellectual and political journals in shaping the political climate. The left has often preferred direct action to the long march through opinion pages. In the next four years, we cannot be indifferent to ideas. It is especially important that the voice of *Dissent* be heard.

We will continue to defend the values of the democratic left, but we can only do that with your help.

All of us who work on the magazine and write for it contribute our labor, time, talents, and money. But our costs still outstrip our income. We ask for help only every two years, and we ask only for what we absolutely need to keep going . . . well, a little more, to "grow" the magazine. Our goal for 2001 is

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We are more than halfway there. Please lend a hand—if possible, with contributions of three figures (or even four: we believe in progressive self-taxation). You can pay out your pledge in installments over this year or you can make life a little easier for us by sending the full amount now.

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Another World Is Possible

Susan George

In this space last year ("Carte Blanche, Bête Noire," Winter 2000), I described some aspects of the emerging European and worldwide movement against corporate-driven globalization, ending on an optimistic note ("it's . . . a great time to be politically alive"). A year on, I'd say it's greater still. The movement is gaining strength, exudes self-confidence, and has chalked up some partial victories. Young people are joining in droves and the adversary is, if not yet on the ropes, at least a bit dazed by the breadth and determination of the offensive.

The media in some countries still try hard to treat the genus *protester* as a marginal curiosity rather than a political animal. The *Washington Post* reported on the April demonstrations against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the "Style" section, stressing hair, nose rings, and body art. In Europe, however, and particularly in France, the press has been obliged to accept and report on the new actors that have arisen alongside transnational corporations and governments. The media now provide at least a capsule version of our message.

"Seattle" has become shorthand for a turning point, marking the moment when the anti-globalization forces thrust themselves upon the mainstream consciousness. As I write, the Seattle era has barely celebrated its first birthday, yet some incredible events have occurred.

Actually, I refuse the term "anti-globalization" that the media have lumbered us with. This combat is really between those who want inclusive globalization based on cooperation and solidarity and those who want the market to make all the decisions. Thomas Friedman, an ardent apostle of the latter view, puts it perfectly in his book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*: as your country is forced to accept the new, neoliberal rules, "your economy grows and your politics shrink." (In fact, your economy doesn't necessarily grow, and certainly not as much as between 1950-1975, but that's another story, one Friedman chooses not to tell.)

Protesters, on the other hand, think politics should be stretched and expanded so as to engender a radically new kind of internationalism. People my age cut their political teeth in anti-colonial, anti-imperialist solidarity movements—for Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, South Africa, and the like. This time it's different. There is a genuine and growing sense that all ordinary people, wherever they live, are in this together. We have the same grievances and sense of injustice; we have, above all, the same enemies, even though the trade unionists, environmentalists, and cultural workers of the North lead far more comfortable lives than globalization's myriad losers in the South. No one denies that the chief victims are the billion people living on less than a dollar a day and the three billion—half the world—making do with less than two dollars per day. But suddenly the injuries they endure seem relevant to us all.

The fight is also about making new and different rules. The media stress lawlessness—and there is some on the part of a tiny fraction of those who have taken to the streets—but on the whole the protesters are studiously nonviolent and want enforceable rules. They understand that the notion of "deregulation" is a sham. States may be downsizing their regulatory arsenals, but new rules are being made all the time at the international level by organizations most see as fronts for transnational corporations and that no citizen has a prayer of influencing unless it's by blocking their meetings.

Old war horses like me who have spent de-

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cades writing and speaking about such austere topics as the horrors of world hunger, third world debt, the World Bank or the World Trade Organization (WTO), gaze in wonder at this new movement, hopeful that we might have had something to do with it. Perhaps we did—at least I doubt that it emerged full-blown from the head of Zeus—but whatever its roots, there has never before existed such instinctual one-worldism, at least not in my experience. Young people especially seem to find it completely normal to come out in large numbers and quite possibly get their heads bashed over issues like structural adjustment, sweatshops and unfair trade policies whose impacts are mostly felt thousands of miles away from their own precincts.

In France, a two-and-a-half-year-old organization called the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions in Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) has 27,000 members, 170 local committees, several cross-cutting sectoral affinity groups (culture, Africa, Mediterranean, trade, and so on) and is growing steadily in 16 other countries. Despite its name, its concerns go beyond obtaining a "Tobin Tax" on international currency transactions and include third world debt, the international financial institutions, the protection of public pension funds, and, most recently, the WTO. This movement, like many others, is helping people to understand how globalization works and for whom; its activists are in the streets for every major political rendezvous. In fact, more French people demonstrated in twenty-some different cities in solidarity with Seattle than came out in Seattle itself.

And then there was the extraordinary trial of José Bové and his nine small-farmer comrades at the end of June—at least eighty thousand people turned up in the sleepy town of Millau (population twenty thousand) to support the sheep farmers who dismantled a McDonald's to protest just about everything from the proliferation of junk food and hormone-fed beef to U.S. cultural dominance and the power of the WTO. The whole world must by now be familiar with this mustachioed folk hero, the beginning of whose saga I reported here last year.

So the climate is improving and the spirit is there. The problem is that we haven't actually forced the corporate globalizers and their hench-organizations to change. Yes, we got rid of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment; yes, we've won temporarily on some genetically modified organism issues; yes, a couple of meetings got short-circuited or shut down. But the same old people with their same old policies are still firmly in place. We have a long way to go before we win.

Even when they retire, the globalizers are not rebuked but instead—I weigh my words—glorified. Take the case of Michel Camdessus, head of the IMF for thirteen long years during which millions of lives were destroyed or shortened by IMF-devised structural adjustment policies, all of which he oversaw and approved.

The Vatican has now named the selfsame Camdessus to its Justice and Peace Commission in charge of defining social policy for the church. When Henry Kissinger got the Nobel Peace Prize, we had to recognize that there are moments when political satire cannot compete with reality; so it is with Camdessus in his new chair. As for the IMF, structural adjustment hatchet man Stanley Fischer is still in the number-two slot behind the new German managing director, Horst Köhler.

For years the IMF's blanket excuse for mayhem inflicted on ordinary people in southern and eastern countries was, "We are not a development agency." Now, all of a sudden, "We" are. At least "We" have changed our rhetoric so that the "Extended Structural Adjustment Facility" has become the "Poverty Reduction and Growth Fund," although no transformation of the content is perceptible. As in magical thinking, the name of the thing acts upon the thing itself.

James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, also talks a good game. No one is more affected by the plight of the poor than he; his speech at the annual General Meeting in Prague was a model of hand-wringing concern. Wolfensohn nonetheless ditched his chief economist, Joe Stiglitz, who dared to criticize structural adjustment and the Washington Consensus. It is widely rumored that Stiglitz was a thorn in the side of U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers; that the latter rang up

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Wolfensohn to say, "Jim, if you want another five years at the bank, Joe must go." Be that as it may, the only man at the bank who was telling at least a part of the truth got the sack. Except, that is, for Ravi Kanbur, another honorable bank economist and chief author of its flagship *World Development Report* on poverty, who resigned rather than let Summers rewrite substantial portions of his text. [Ed. Note: See "The Cracking Washington Consensus," by Mark Levinson, *Dissent*, Fall 2000.]

Resistance to Pressure

Neither of these institutions has wavered on the issue of third world debt in spite of the millions of signatures collected and the huge numbers of people demonstrating thanks to the organizing efforts of Jubilee 2000. The debt is higher than ever, and there was, in fact, a regression in commitments between the G-7 meetings in Cologne in 1999 and Okinawa in 2000. The IMF even managed to tell Mozambique, arguably the poorest country in the world, that it didn't have to pay a hundred million dollars in debt service after its devastating floods, only seventy-three million dollars.

Across the pond at the WTO, services negotiations are moving forward in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Seattle couldn't stop this new stage of liberalization because it had been mandated in Marrakesh when the WTO was created. Transparency and accountability reach new nadirs on the shores of Lake Geneva, where the minutes of the all-important working groups are posted ten to twelve months after their meetings occur.

"Services" under GATS includes public transport, health, education, environmental, and cultural services—160 areas in all. Whereas Americans benefit from virtually no public services (the postal service comes to mind but little else), Europeans, who have many, are deeply and rightfully suspicious of their negotiators' intentions. Our governments and the European trade commissioner Pascal Lamy keep reassuring us that our excellent public health insurance and generally good public school systems are not in jeopardy, yet Lamy's chief services negotiator has, for example, announced that "health and education are ripe for liberalization."

Lamy himself told a recent meeting of the U.S. Council for International Business in New York that "If we [Europeans] want to improve our own access to foreign markets then we can't keep our protected sectors out of the sunlight. We have to be open to negotiating them all if we are going to have the material for a big deal. In the U.S. and the EU [European Union], that means some pain in some sectors but gain in many others and I think we both know that we are going to have to bite the bullet to get what we want." He has not yet announced what "pain" he is prepared to accept on behalf of his fellow Europeans.

Lamy is also pushing for changes in the EU Amsterdam Treaty that would give him "fast-track" powers in trade negotiations like the ones President Clinton was refused by the U.S. Congress. If he gets his way, individual governments will no longer be able to veto agreements concluded by the EU. National parliaments will have nothing to say, while the largely toothless European Parliament will be "consulted."

Carrion Capitalism

The usual suspects, some of whose deeds are described above, are, whether they know it and like it or not, front men. I try not to use the word "globalization" now without a qualifier such as "market-driven" or "corporate-led," because Transnational Corporations (TNCs) are its real motors. The TNCs had a rather good year 2000, rounding out the twentieth century with the biggest buying binge in history. In 1999, they carried out more than six thousand trans-border mergers and acquisitions, mostly the latter, for a total of $720 billion. More than a hundred of these were mega-deals involving over a billion dollars; totals for M and As, as they say in the trade, are fully expected to surpass the trillion dollar mark by the end of 2000.

Financial crises like those in Asia, Russia, or Latin America have their uses, weakening foreign firms and rendering them vulnerable to takeover artists. Several brokerage houses and hedge funds have set up "vulture funds," whose only mission is to seek out wounded companies and those whose privatization is being forced by the World Bank-IMF tandem.

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Perhaps we could coin a phrase and call it "carrion capitalism"?

The outcome of this ballet of the trans-border billions is huge and growing concentration in every sector. The dangers are obvious, particularly for smaller, weaker countries, but also for employees and consumers who are not going to get many benefits when the entire world has become a collection of giant oligopolies.

Meanwhile, U.S. corporations are enjoying a fiscal field day. Between 1996 and 1998, several dozen of the most prominent U.S. firms either paid no federal taxes at all (and in addition got refunds and credits) or paid far less, at much lower rates, than they theoretically owed. Corporate profits flew off the charts during this period (up by more than 23 percent), yet income to the U.S. treasury from the corporate sector grew by only 7.7 percent.

Perhaps the treasury should thank its lucky stars for even that, given that tax shelters are extraordinarily thick on the ground. Companies have recently discovered the highly effective dodge of stock options, which for tax purposes are counted as an expense but do not count against profits as reported to shareholders. So you can reward your top executives beyond any historical precedent while graciously allowing ordinary tax-paying citizens to shoulder the burden of financing public goods.

Oh yes, Microsoft and Cisco Systems paid zero federal tax in 1999. All this and more can be gleaned from a report by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy in Washington. A representative of the Tax Executives Institute commented to Bloomberg News that "There is nothing in the report that suggests that any of this results from any illegal or improper activity." Quite so. That's precisely the problem.

To sum up, the climate may be far better than it was, but so far we haven't actually won anything from the worldwide corporate government. We need more people and better organization if we mean to start changing that. Anyone who wants to join this fight will have a reasonably good time, valuable comrades, and a huge amount of unpaid if rewarding work over a long haul.

I sent this piece to *Dissent* before the result of the U.S. elections was clear. I don't vote in the United States, because I don't have to live with the choice of the U.S. electorate—at least not directly—and as a French citizen I can exercise my democratic rights where I live. But had I voted, it would have been for Ralph Nader. There comes a time when enough is enough, when you have to say that "another world is possible," which is the slogan of ATTAC. That is also the message of Seattle and all the mini-Seattles. The Democratic Party is basically happy with the world we've got. I think the whole point of politics right now is to fight for a different one. Another world isn't just possible—it's indispensable. ●

Susan George is vice president of ATTAC France. Her most recent book is *The Lugano Report*.

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How Should the Left Respond to Globalization?

Debate on the global economy is intense, provoked especially by the protests in Seattle; Washington, D.C.; and Prague. But the arguments often come without real proposals. With this in mind, Dissent *posed the following question to several commentators: In recent years, the left in the United States and abroad has raised tough questions about "globalization." What institutions—or reforms of existing institutions—would you advocate as the centerpiece of a program of alternatives proposed by the left? Please present at least two or three practical ideas and the means by which to carry them out.*—Eds.

Ha-Joon Chang

With increasing international economic integration, it has become popular to argue that we need more and stronger global institutions to deal with new problems that have been overwhelming the existing national and global institutions. The recent plethora of proposals to reform existing institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Bank for International Settlements, and introduce new ones (for example, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the World Financial Authority [WFA]) reflects this trend.

In my view, what is more urgent is not setting up more global institutions (the WFA may be a partial exception here) but changing how the existing institutions work.

On one level, this would require a change in the decision-making structure of major global institutions. At the moment, none of them are run "democratically." The most powerful of them, the World Bank and the IMF, are run on the one-dollar-one-vote principle, while in the ostensibly more democratic United Nations, the most powerful countries have formal veto power. The WTO may be formally more democratic than the UN, as it does not give veto power to any country, but in practice the more powerful states have disproportionate influence, and its dispute settlement mechanism is beyond the financial and human-resource capabilities of the developing countries. Needless to say, the actual structure of a "democratic" alternative decision-making structure is debatable (for example, one-person-one-vote on a global scale? one-country-one-vote? qualified majority voting by countries as in the European Union?). Nevertheless, making decision-making structures in existing global institutions more democratic is the necessary first step, if we want to see them adopt more "progressive" goals that take into account the interests of the less powerful countries (and indeed of the less powerful in the advanced countries).

It would be naïve to assume that such changes in decision-making structures alone can do the job. Whatever the structure, if decision makers are ill-informed, the best policies won't result. We need a much more open intellectual environment than what is currently offered by the "establishment" academia and mass media.

Two essential elements need to be part of the debate on the future of the global economy if it is to become more "informed."

First of all, we need to question the widespread assumption that the driving force behind globalization is technological change—cheaper communications and transportation—that cannot, and should not, be "politically" influenced. Historical evidence suggests that *politics* rather than technology

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ultimately shapes the patterns of globalization in a given era. Over the last two centuries, technology progressed more or less constantly, but the degree of globalization of the world economy fluctuated wildly. The world economy was a lot more globalized in the late nineteenth century than in the 1950s and the 1960s, despite the fact that the earlier period had much less developed communications and transportation technologies. In the late nineteenth century we had no more than steamships and telegraphy, whereas by the 1960s, we had almost every communications and transportation technology we have now except the Internet. The degree of globalization during the early postwar years was limited not because technologies did not exist but because then there was a firm international political consensus that unrestrained capitalism would eventually self-destruct, as it had done through the two world wars and the Great Depression.

Second, there has to be wider recognition that when now-advanced countries were "developing," they used all kinds of "developmental" policies that are now frowned upon, if not deemed illegal. Many of these policies have been airbrushed out of history. For example, how many American defenders of free trade know that the United States maintained, in an attempt to protect its "infant industries" from British competition, the highest tariff barrier in the world for nearly a century until the Second World War? How many German human rights activists know that in the late nineteenth century the exports of goods made by German convict labor was a big "human rights" issue in Britain? How many of the Swiss or the Dutch who advocate the TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) agreement in the WTO know that their own countries did not have a patent law until the early twentieth century? Of course, recalling this history is not an attempt to justify deplorable practices that go on in the developing countries today, nor is it to deny the need for some minimum of global standards. But, clearly confronting their own history will force advanced countries to have more humility and realism when they demand this or that "standard" from poorer countries.

What we need for a better global order is not yet another proposal for a new institution, but an attempt to make the existing institutions more democratic and just. This, in turn, will require a more informed and open debate on the policy options based on a more objective and humble reading of history. ●

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OUR RELENTLESS evolution toward a global economy will clearly require new institutions both to regulate unstable markets and to protect ordinary citizens from the brutalities of worldwide, dog-eat-dog capitalism. Eventually, like national economies, the global marketplace needs the equivalent of a central bank, securities regulation, enforceable labor and environmental rights, and the other institutions of modern social democracy.

But the social democratic left has little leverage at the level of global politics. So it is caught in a Catch-22: a global social democracy requires stronger international institutions. Stronger institutions increase the power of international capital, which further undercuts efforts at global social democracy. Rather, the left's leverage is in national politics. It is on that base that it must build its alternative program for the global economy.

Given this, the democratic left should not waste its time doing the work of the corporate right: decentralizing the organization charts of international agencies, creating new ones with more sophisticated powers, adding advisory committees of nongovernmental organizations, and so on. Instead, social democrats should concentrate on proposals that appeal to the needs of working people across borders, linking national and global economic questions in ways that build toward a social democratic vision of the global economy.

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Here are three such proposals, in ascending order of difficulty:

1. *Coordinated lowering of interest rates* It is a measure of the timidity of today's social democratic parties that there is little political agitation over high real interest rates in an era in which the core inflation threat is close to zero. High interest rates are a crushing burden on indebted developing economies, and they have made a major contribution to slow growth in Europe. Even in struggling Japan, signs of recovery are greeted by the central bank as a reason to raise the cost of money. As Federal Reserve Board head Alan Greenspan slows down the U.S. economy, it will be essential that Europe and Japan loosen monetary policy—both for their own economies and to maintain global momentum.

A parallel demand from progressives around the world that central banks lower rates would begin to challenge the hegemony of finance—particularly the bond-holding class—whose interests have been favored over poor debtors everywhere. Such campaigns also have the potential of creating alliances with the small- and medium-sized producers of goods and services in all countries whose survival depends on cheap money.

2. *Financial transactions tax, a.k.a. a "Tobin Tax"* The purpose of such a tax, whether applied domestically or internationally, is to slow down the destructive short-term, speculative movement of capital. It has the virtue of being easily understood, administered with minimal bureaucratic discretion, and already supported by many influential people around the world. Several years ago, for example, the government of Canada proposed a discussion of the Tobin Tax for the agenda of a G-7 meeting in Halifax. The U.S. Treasury quickly squashed the idea, although a domestic version was endorsed by the current secretary of the treasury, Larry Summers, a decade ago.

Social democrats around the world should campaign for a global transaction tax that would use the proceeds for long-term investment in education and health in poor countries. In the advanced nations, the left could also extend the idea into their own national economies, where financial speculation is a waste of scarce capital and a major driver of increasing inequality.

3. *A "grand bargain" on social standards and development* Efforts to make labor rights and environmental standards part of international trade and finance agreements have been blocked by an alliance of multinational business and developing country elites. Some of the latter use globalization as a rationale for exploiting their own workers. Others are progressive nationalists opposed to ceding any more authority to Western-dominated global institutions. To overcome this resistance, the left should propose a "grand bargain" between working people of developed and developing nations, in which the former would provide guaranteed commitments for long-term development aid, radical debt relief, and an enlarged developing world presence in the governance of international agencies. In return, the developing world would agree to enforceable labor rights and environmental standards—appropriate to each nation's stage of development—as part of international trade and financial agreements.

Because the United States is by far the most influential nation in these matters, one way to move forward would be to start close to home with a campaign by progressives in the three member countries of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for a North American version of the grand bargain. The proposal of the newly elected Mexican president, Vicente Fox, to expand NAFTA along the lines of the European Union provides a possible political opening for such a campaign. His specific call for open borders is a political nonstarter. But the United States and Canada could provide aid to Mexico, and relief from some of the most onerous conditions of the original NAFTA imposed on Mexico, in exchange for a continent-wide system of enforceable labor rights and environmental standards. Such a positive proposal would put progressives in Canada, Mexico, and the United States in a posture of shaping the future rather than defending the past. ●

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Thea Lee

THE LABOR movement has staked out a progressive, internationalist position on the reform of the global economy. We believe that the rules and institutions of the global economy need to be dramatically transformed in order to change the dynamics of competition. We must ensure that governments and corporations respect workers' and human rights and the environment, and that they face economic consequences—through loss of investment, market access, or loans—when they do not. We should also help promote sustainable, equitable, and democratic engines of growth in both developed and developing countries. We must shake up the balance of bargaining power in the global economy, by strengthening the voices of workers, community activists, and environmentalists.

Here are three practical ideas for moving this broad agenda forward.

First, the American labor movement needs to deepen its solidarity and ties to workers, unions, religious, human rights, antipoverty, and pro-democracy organizations in developed and developing countries. The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) already has extensive relationships and communications with trade unions in other countries through its overseas offices in developing countries (called the Solidarity Center) and international labor groups such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions based in Brussels.

But we need to do more to broaden ties to non-labor groups and to deepen connections within our unions and rank-and-file membership. This will come about initially through working with trade union partners and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with which they already work. It will also occur as we in the labor movement broaden our agenda to encompass issues of direct concern to developing countries, such as debt relief, in coalitions such as Jubilee 2000.

Second, the labor movement worldwide needs to pressure our governments in a coordinated fashion to increase aid to developing countries, both bilaterally and through United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Program and the International Labor Organization (ILO). The same resources that the rich countries of the world spent to wage the cold war can and should be diverted now to strengthening and enforcing core workers' rights and meeting basic human needs. It is a disgrace that the United States does not come close to meeting the UN standard of devoting seven-tenths of one percent of its gross domestic product to development aid; we should aim even higher.

Third, we need to develop a broad array of tools and mechanisms to strengthen workers' rights worldwide—through trade agreements, popular campaigns, the international financial institutions, export credit agencies, and cooperative programs of technical assistance. All of the international institutions, as well as national governments, need to take drastic steps to ensure that ordinary citizens can both understand the decisions that are made and have appropriate avenues to provide input. Some first steps at the World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, would include timely release of documents (such as minutes of meetings or country submissions to dispute resolution proceedings), opening dispute-resolution deliberations to the public, and ensuring a balance of perspectives on dispute panels (currently limited to "trade experts," generally trade lawyers and ex-diplomats).

Ultimately, we would like to see workers' rights universally protected under international trade rules at the WTO. But we understand that we have a long way to go to build the consensus needed even to discuss workers' rights there. As we work toward building that international consensus and reforming the WTO's rules and procedures to ensure more transparency and accountability, we will continue to insist that the United States incorporate enforceable workers' rights and environmental protections in all trade agreements it negotiates or legislates—unilateral, bilateral, and regional.

The bilateral trade agreement signed in October by the United States and Jordan represents a significant and constructive step for-

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ward in this regard, even though more remains to be done. It reaffirms both countries' commitment to uphold the core workers' rights identified by the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work—freedom of association, right to organize and bargain collectively, and prohibitions on child labor, forced labor, and discrimination in employment. Both countries also agree to effectively enforce their own labor laws, with the possibility of invoking dispute resolution in the case of failure to do so. For the first time, the United States and a trading partner have agreed to enforceable protections for workers' rights in the core of a trade agreement, with the same dispute resolution available for labor and environmental provisions as for the other commercial aspects of the agreement. The AFL-CIO looks forward to working closely with our brothers and sisters in the Jordanian trade unions to improve the enforcement of labor laws in both countries.

The labor movement will also continue to pressure the IMF, the World Bank, and other international financial institutions to ensure that the conditions they impose on developing countries do not undermine the core workers' rights identified by the ILO and do not impose unnecessary and counterproductive austerity, deregulation, privatization, and trade and capital account liberalization.

We need to continue our work at both the domestic and international level, with governments and with social partners, to raise issues, change rules, reform institutions, and create space for workers to build their own unions and exercise their own political voice. ●

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Saskia Sassen

CITIES, OR RATHER networks of cities, are becoming a key site for engaging global corporate power. Global cities are particularly important because they are where the core elements of the global economy are located, in strategic concentrations of resources, infrastructures, structures, human talent, and the specialized know-how that is crucial for the management, coordination, and servicing of the global economic system. This network of global cities constitutes a strategic space for politics precisely because it is a strategic space for the global economy.

The demonstrations by the anti-globalization network have signaled some of this, but we now need to build on what they have "demonstrated"—that global corporate power can be engaged directly in certain types of places. We can see the potential for developing a place-specific politics with a global span.

Recognizing these possibilities requires understanding something about the global economy that is usually left out of the picture. I argue elsewhere (in *The Global City*) that the emphasis on hypermobility, global communications, and the neutralization of place and distance in the mainstream account of globalization needs to be balanced with a focus on the work behind command functions, on the actual work process in the leading information industries (finance and specialized services), and on global marketplaces. This understanding incorporates the material facilities underlying globalization and the massive concentrations of place-bound resources that are part of the story. Unlike the mainstream account, it does not take the existence of a global economic system as a given, a function of the power of transnational corporations and global communications.

Because globalization is a complex, multi-scalar and multi-sited politico-economic system, developing an alternative politics will take a variety of efforts and institutions. What I am describing is, then, just one element in a broad range of initiatives. Further, because other participants in this symposium address the challenges to agencies such as the IMF, the World Bank, and WTO, I focus on a less noted type of effect in political and institution-building. This type of work is centered in cities, networks of cities, and non-formal political actors. In this case, the practical idea the editors ask for can be found in the fact that such city-based net-

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works enable a cross-border politics of non-formal, political actors.

The capabilities for global operation, coordination, and control resulting from the new information technologies and from the power of transnational corporations need to be produced, managed, and serviced. Looking at it this way, we recover the material conditions, production sites, and place-boundedness that are also part of globalization and the information economy. Global cities are places where we can engage global corporate power, and go beyond demonstrating against it, because these cities are where much of the global economy is actually being organized and managed.

The global city is also a sort of new frontier zone where an enormous mix of people converges. Those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities, can gain presence there, presence vis-à-vis power and presence vis-à-vis each other. This signals, for me, the possibility of a new type of politics centered in new types of political actors. It is not simply a matter of having or not having power. There are new hybrid bases from which to act. By using the term presence I try to capture some of this.

THE SPACE of the city is a far more concrete space for politics than that of the nation. Non-formal political actors can be part of politics there in a way that is much more difficult at the national level. Nationally politics needs to run through existing formal systems, whether the electoral political system or the judiciary (taking state agencies to court). Non-formal political actors are rendered invisible in national politics. City space accommodates a broad range of activities—squatting, demonstrations against police brutality, fighting for the rights of immigrants and the homeless, the politics of culture and identity, and gay and lesbian and queer politics. Much of this becomes visible on the street, enacted by people rather than dependent on massive media technologies. Street-level politics give rise to new types of political subjects/actors.

In short, I think something enormously important can be built that would go beyond using cities for demonstrations. This urban political project could be an important building block of the politics for global justice and for demanding accountability from global corporate power without necessarily going through some sort of world state or the supranational level. It runs through places yet engages the global. It would construct a countergeography of globalization.

We see an instance of this also in the fact that citizens from many countries feel entitled and enabled to engage in demonstrations in cities that emerge as sites for global corporate capital no matter in what country these cities are located. We can think of these as denationalized citizenship practices.

Through the Internet, local initiatives become part of a global network without losing focus on their specific local struggles. These give rise to a politics of the local with a big difference—the localities are connected with each other across a region, a country, or the world. A network may be global, but that does not mean that everything happens at the global level.

The global city emerges as a strategic site where new claims by informal political actors materialize and assume concrete forms. The loss of power at the national level produces the possibility for new forms of power and politics at the subnational level. The national level as container of social process and power is cracked. This cracked casing opens up possibilities for a political geography that links subnational spaces and allows non-formal political actors to engage strategic components of global capital. ●

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E. Benjamin Skinner

FROM SEATTLE to Washington and Prague, it has been a noisy year for those trying to democratize international financial institutions (IFIs). Critics of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have made their voices heard (and banners seen, and rocks felt) early and often in an effort to call attention to the problems of globalization. Unfortunately, it will take more than sound and fury to reorient international economic strategies toward sustainable and equitable growth.

The protesters who say that globalization today provides a disproportionate share of benefits to transnational elites are correct. They are right to say that policies based on the Washington Consensus tend to reinforce existing economic orders within emerging economies. There are many problems with the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank) and the WTO, but these problems stem more from their weaknesses than their strengths. Though intelligently managed by well-intentioned professionals, they have been hamstrung in their ability to make real change and create lasting growth by their lack of leverage within the regions they most need and want to help, and by their limited capacity for innovative solutions.

In the first place, they are too large and centralized, and have little moral authority in developing countries. Often seen as controlled by Western policy makers, their calls for painful austerity measures are frequently met with suspicion or disregard.

Furthermore, they have too few instruments for encouraging new strategies, and those tools are often ineffective. IFIs have insufficient means for supervision or real regulation of the economies that they attempt to reform. One-size-fits-all approaches are rarely successful. World Bank–sponsored microcredit programs are surely a step in the right direction, but they are too small and too narrowly focused on those in extreme poverty to effect large-scale growth.

Better alternative solutions are possible, however. Strategies should be sought that will make billions of people able to consume as well as just produce. In other words, if IFIs can come up with creative programs focused on increasing domestic living standards through democratized access to capital, much of the world can become more well-rounded—and more affluent—capitalists.*

Economist Jane D'Arista very astutely uses the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) as a model for growth within emerging economies. From 1932 to 1947, the RFC built a thriving middle class, financed a strong infrastructure, and thus strengthened the economic pillar of the American Century.

The RFC was the U.S. government's lending body, originally intended to support agriculture, industry, and commerce, but extended to give credit to solvent businesses that would otherwise be unable to obtain it. Eventually, it was authorized to recapitalize the entire financial system by buying stocks in a broad variety of enterprises. A major part of the RFC was the Federal National Mortgage Association—known today as Fannie Mae—which was to make home ownership a reality for millions of Americans.

During the 1940s, the RFC became a major source of funding for the war effort, and after victory, when it had largely accomplished its goal of a recapitalized, dynamic economy, Congress voted to break it up. Fannie Mae and the Small Business Administration—two of the many surviving elements of the RFC program—continued to support home ownership, small business growth, and thus the development of a robust middle class.**

The RFC worked, and similar credit pro-

*Furthermore, IFIs would do best to coordinate these strategies and their implementation with new regionally based programs and institutions. For a more complete discussion of this subject, see Walter Mead and Sherle Schwenninger, "A Financial Architecture for Middle-Class-Oriented Development" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2000). The report is available on-line at www.cfr.org.

**For a more in-depth discussion of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, see Jane D'Arista, "Building the Financial Infrastructure for Middle Class Emerging Economies" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2000). The paper is available online at www.cfr.org.

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grams will work for the developing world. It's time for emerging economies to receive a New Deal similar in nature to the one that made the U.S. economy the largest in the history of the world. To foster this, international institutions should work to make capital markets broader, deeper, and more liquid.

In particular, by making access to loans cheaper and easier and capital markets more flexible, institutions can encourage greater capital flows to the international lower middle classes, thus increasing living standards for a huge swath of the world's population. Working to keep interest rates low; expanding debt and equity markets; and increasing access to credit through mini- (rather than just micro-) lending for housing, education, and small businesses, IFIs will pave the way for the 2.7 billion people that the World Bank classifies as middle income to become one enormous global consumer class.

Much of the world is ready for middle-class- oriented growth strategies. When postwar West Germany embarked on its middle-class-oriented development policy, per capita income was around $3,000 (1995 $U.S.). Today, China and 132 other countries are more productive. When the RFC was gearing up during the Great Depression, per capita GDP had bottomed out at $4,800 in the United States. Today, the average per capita GDP for the world exceeds that by 30 percent.

Contrary to the many loud claims that the IFIs have outlived their usefulness, I argue that they have not yet filled their potential. But in order to fill that potential, they must first build a consensus around a new plan for growth. This plan should include the development of new strategies for such reforms as stable currency regimes and debt relief and restructuring. Most important, it should involve the construction of a global middle class by democratizing access to capital.

This new vision for an international financial architecture won't fit on a banner. But it will fit most of the world's emerging economies. Capitalism is a powerful and complex machine that—if fueled by the right mix of sound economics and innovative tactics—can create universal prosperity rather than stark stratification. The real challenge for the left is not uniting in criticism of the IFIs, but agreeing on workable alternatives. Middle-class-oriented capitalism worked marvelously to raise living standards in Europe, Japan, and North America. The question now is how best to make popular capitalism work for the developing world as well. ●

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Democracies: Emerging or Submerging?

Anthony W. Pereira

THE SECOND half of the twentieth century was an age of democracy. The women's movement, anti-colonial struggles, and challenges to what W. E. B. Du Bois called the "color line" won political inclusion for many people throughout the world. And starting in the mid-1970s, electoral democracies replaced authoritarian regimes in southern Europe, Latin America, and parts of Africa and Asia. This process was extended when the former Soviet Union broke up, and communist regimes collapsed there and in Eastern Europe. According to Freedom House, a nonprofit institution that issues an annual assessment of political and civil rights worldwide, there were only twenty-two democracies with 31 percent of the world population in 1950, out of a total of eighty sovereign states. Today, there are 120 electoral democracies representing 58 percent of the world population, out of 192 sovereign states. The percentage of the world's population living under some form of democracy nearly doubled in the last fifty years. This was a historic shift of epic proportions.

Western triumphalism about the "end of history," however, was never justified. Nondemocratic regimes still exist. Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Swaziland are traditional monarchies. China, Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam are nominally communist, one-party regimes whose leaders deeply distrust multiparty democracy. And military regimes of the kind so common in developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s survive. Burma (Myanmar), which the democratic activist Aung San Suu Kyi calls a "Fascist Disneyland," is one of them, as are Pakistan and, until 1999, Nigeria. Although they often declare their intent to supervise a democratic "transition," such regimes do not respect the democratic principles of universal suffrage and elected government.

In addition, some of the world's states have imploded, rendering the form of their regime irrelevant: Sierra Leone, the Congo, Colombia, and Sri Lanka today; Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia a few years ago. It is likely that there will be more, and that international intervention, when it occurs, will not be entirely successful in promoting peace and rebuilding the state.

Furthermore, many new democracies are illiberal, unable or unwilling to guarantee their citizens important political and civil rights, even if regular elections are held. Leaders with a dictatorial bent manipulate political systems to prevent genuine competition or to steal elections. Observers speak of these polities as "democracies without citizenship" or "delegative democracies"—political systems in which plebiscitary elections create mandates for powerful chief executives who rule virtually unchecked.

Finally, changes in patterns of economic and political organization have shifted authority upward to regional and global institutions (the European Union [EU], the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA], the World Trade Organization [WTO], the International Monetary Fund [IMF], the World Bank, multinational corporations, and financial markets) and downward to local and provincial governments. The scope of the nation-state's power has diminished as its institutions have, more and more, been democratized.

The "Third Wave" and "Transitology"

Given all this, what can be said about the world's new democracies? A survey of the situation suggests that many of them are in trouble, and only sustained transnational pressure to democratize globally will create the political

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conditions in which they can flourish.

The creation of new democracies in the late twentieth century involved the demise of many different kinds of regimes. In Portugal and Spain, long-lasting fascist dictatorships ended; in Latin America, brutal military dictatorships ran aground; in Africa and Asia, one-party machines lost their hegemony. Few would question the value of such events for people living in these countries. However, much of the current literature about the emerging democracies reflects assumptions that don't hold universally and agendas that embody the interests of powerful external actors.

U.S. political scientist Samuel Huntington christened the democratic transitions of the mid-1970s and after as the "third wave," a successor to the first wave of democratization in the nineteenth century and the second wave during and after World War II. Another political scientist, Philippe Schmitter, wryly refers to the work of Huntington and the legions of other scholars and practitioners who write about democratic transitions as "transitology." Despite its apparently neutral language, transitology reflects ideological assumptions about new democracies. For example, democracy tends to be defined minimally as competition between elites in competitive elections. It is seen primarily as the product of conscious crafting and deal-making and not, as an earlier generation of scholars believed, of long-term historical conflicts between rulers and ruled.

Perhaps most important, certain kinds of democratic transition are taken to be inherently better than others. Portugal's 1974 revolution, for example, tends to be downplayed in the transitology literature, because it involved mass insurrection, the collapse of the old regime, and curbs on the prerogatives of business and private property in its early phase. In contrast, the more conservative and negotiated Spanish transition of 1975, even though it was actually more violent than its Portuguese counterpart, is the emblematic transition in the transitology literature.

Transitologists extract certain lessons from the Spanish model that they hope democratizers elsewhere will use: the "masses" threaten to destabilize transitions, and their mobilization should be feared, not encouraged; the prerogatives of the market, as defined by the most powerful actors in the global economy, should not be challenged; and negotiated transitions always produce better democracies than those that result from a regime collapse. Such a perspective is intrinsic to the U.S. government's "democracy promotion" bureaucracy—including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)—which now spends roughly $700 million per year trying to promote a particular version of democracy overseas.

The third wave involved technology as well as ideas. If the generation of 1968 demanded a revolution, the generation of 1978 actually created one—but it was technological, not political. The information and communications revolution involving satellites, cellular telephones, digital technology, the Internet, fax machines, and the computer chip made data gathering, processing, and transmission cheaper and easier than ever before. It became markedly easier to organize elections in poor countries with limited transportation and communications infrastructures. An entire international regime of election specialists mushroomed in the 1990s, and the United Nations monitored and sometimes ran elections in many places. New information technology was allied to the political transformations of the third wave to produce a sense among many analysts that the expansion of democracy was limitless, irreversible, and conducive to all sorts of other positive changes, such as economic development and international peace.

Actually Existing Democracy

In fact, transitology is of limited usefulness in understanding the politics of new democracies. Many of these political systems are marked by deep disjunctures between the sophistication of their elections, on the one hand, and the legitimacy of their governments and the actual enjoyment of rights by their citizens, on the other.

Although elected civilian governments are far more common in the world than they were thirty years ago, the continuing or revived popularity of former dictators is remarkable. In

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South Korea, for example, surveys reveal that the most popular former ruler of the country is the late Park Hung Chee, the autocratic leader of a military regime from 1961 to 1979. In a recent poll of Paraguayans, 70 percent said that they were better off under the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954-89) than they are today. Polls of Russians reveal the same sentiments about the Brezhnev era. And in Brazil, only 47 percent of respondents in a recent poll agreed with the statement, "Democracy is preferable to any other form of government." Eighteen percent said that in some circumstances, authoritarianism was preferable, and 29 percent thought that it made no difference. Although many new democracies now exist, therefore, it is striking that large numbers of people in these countries prefer authoritarian leaders and are indifferent or hostile to current democratic governments.

Nor do regular elections necessarily prevent the rule of dictatorial leaders. For example, in Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe succeeded in terrorizing the rural population into at least partially endorsing the continued rule of his Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) Party. He directly appointed twenty of the hundred and fifty members of parliament, while his loyal followers controlled the electoral system, and liberation war "veterans" (many too young to have actually fought in the war) replaced politically unreliable schoolteachers as polling station managers. Because of these manipulations and (it is widely suspected) ballot rigging, Mugabe was able to maintain his hold on power despite a strong showing by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in the parliamentary elections of June 2000.

Elections are also sometimes ignored when the results do not favor incumbents. In Burma in 1990, the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) won an election by a large margin but then was prohibited from taking office by the military. Many NLD members, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, remain under house arrest or in prison. Similarly, in Algeria in December 1991, a militant Islamic party won the country's first-ever parliamentary elections. In response, senior army officers forced then-president Chadli Benjedid to resign and suspended the electoral process, forming a regime that remains in power today.

Political and civil rights are therefore nonexistent for large segments of the population in many new democracies. For this reason, Freedom House classifies thirty-five of the world's hundred and twenty democracies as "electoral" but not "liberal" democracies. The number of people in these countries is 20 percent of the world's population. Why is democracy in such political systems so tenuous?

THE QUESTION is complicated, but one way to answer it is to compare new democracies to what I've already called the emblematic case of third wave transition. Spain in 1975, the year of its democratization, had three advantages that are not shared by many other countries: a mature economy, a functioning state bureaucracy, and a society with a high degree of consensus. Each of these deserves some attention.

In the mid-1970s, Spain had a mature capitalist economy in which low-wage agriculture was no longer the leading sector. It had a relatively egalitarian distribution of income compared to that of most developing countries. Spain today has a more egalitarian distribution of income than the United States and a human development score (calculated by the United Nations Development Program) higher than that of Belgium and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, as Spain weathered its first crises as a new democracy, its economy continued to grow, and it faced the enticing prospect of joining the largest and most successful common market in the world, the European Union (EU)—which it did in fact join in 1986.

As a member of the EU, Spain received substantial funds due to policies aimed at reducing economic inequalities within the union. These funds improved infrastructure and boosted employment, especially in Spain's poorest regions. In the period between 1989 and 1993, Spain received about twelve billion ecus (about ten billion U.S. dollars; the ecu preceded the euro), or almost one-quarter of the EU's total structural-aid spending in that period. This was a significant transfer of resources that most countries in the developing

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world cannot hope to attain.

In addition, Spanish state institutions perform relatively well. Indeed, the judiciary performs too well from the point of view of former dictators such as Chile's Augusto Pinochet and Guatemala's Efraim Rios Mont, both of whom have been investigated and charged with crimes against humanity in Spanish courts. Once again, the European Union's influence on Spain was strong and significant. As democracy deepened, the EU encouraged Spain to modernize its legal system and incorporate Europe's human rights provisions.

Finally, Spanish society had a fairly high degree of consensus, at both the mass and elite level, at the time of its transition. The conflicts that had created the Franco regime lay in the distant past. The most violent period of repression had ended three-and-a-half decades earlier. There was a strong consensus on both the right and the left that the horrors of the civil war should not be repeated. With the exception of Basque terrorism, there was a relative lack of ethnic tension or separatist sentiment in the country. And finally, a relatively moderate ruling class was willing to accept, without violence, the re-emergence of the unions and the left that the end of authoritarian rule engendered. What some analysts call the "civic micro foundations" of democracy—trust, tolerance, respect for opposition, and acceptance of equal citizenship—were firmly in place in Spanish society before its transition. All these were strengthened in the years after Franco's death as Spain entered the EU, continued to grow economically, and staged successive elections that resulted in the alternation of ruling parties.

But other new democracies frequently lack one or more of the variables that contributed to the success of the Spanish transition. In some cases, a mature and growing economy, a well-functioning state, and civic micro foundations are all missing.

It is in economic matters that the differences are most striking. Certainly, the revolution in information technology has benefited some developing countries. South Korea manufactures silicon computer chips and India produces software. But for many countries, previously huge socio-economic inequalities with rich countries have widened, as have domestic inequalities.

In Latin America, for example, there has been a marked jump in informal-sector employment in recent years in a region that is already the most unequal in the world. In 1980, the International Labor Organization estimated that 40 percent of Latin America's nonagricultural workforce was in the informal sector. (In agriculture, where work tends to be seasonal, that figure would be far higher.) These workers have no pension benefits, no unemployment insurance, no paid leaves of any kind, and no employment contract—they can be fired at will. By 1998, informal-sector employment had climbed to 58 percent, a majority of the workforce. Among women in the nonagricultural labor market, the figure was even higher, 65 percent that same year. With so many people so vulnerable, elections in Latin America have a different character than those in rich countries. The poor seek patrons in the political system, and politicians give away material benefits to win votes. Patronage and clientelism rob elections of much of their deliberative content, and while they serve as a redistributive mechanism in societies without extensive welfare states, their ability to ensure democratic accountability is diminished. This is true in other parts of the world as well.

In addition, the globalized world economy is highly volatile. Short-term, speculative investments in currencies, stocks, and other liquid assets flow in and out of developing countries quickly and erratically, subject to the wild swings of the international investment community. The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank estimates that economic volatility, measured by the variation in the growth rate of the gross domestic product from one year to the next, is almost three times as high in Latin America as it is in the countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). When economies are volatile, so is politics. In short, the prevailing development model excludes large numbers of people who are not property-owning stakeholders, but who live instead with a high degree of economic insecurity and deprivation. This is not a foundation for successful democracy.

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Much the same story could be told in the area of state institutions, which were seriously debilitated in many developing countries as governments cut spending to cope with the debt crisis of the 1980s. Courts are often neither legitimate nor competent. Widespread crime and violence vitiate the effective exercise of democratic rights for millions.

In many developing countries, but not in Spain, cold war conflicts were large-scale and recent. They make the McCarthy period in the United States look genteel by comparison. The killing fields of Cambodia are one horrific example of this kind of violence, but there are many others. Much of the violence had an ethnic dimension, making it particularly difficult to ameliorate after a democratic transition. Fear and suspicion remain entrenched, hampering the creation of the civic micro foundations of democracy. Violence continues, especially in rural areas, where landowners, state officials, and other powerful groups use armed forces of various kinds to enforce their rule. Elections certified as "free and fair" by international election observers may be marred by widespread intimidation prior to the vote that is not easily monitored by short-term visitors.

Finally, although new information technology is used by states to organize elections, ordinary citizens often lack access to it. Grassroots movements have on occasion used technology—the Zapatistas in Chiapas used the Internet effectively after 1994, for example, and the Grameenphone program has recently provided cellular phones to 100,000 subscribers in 250 villages in Bangladesh. Information technology has great potential to reduce the cost to grassroots organizations of spreading information and organizing. But all too often ordinary people in developing countries are still excluded from the new technology networks. Jeremy Rifkin estimates that 65 percent of the current world population has never made a telephone call. A *Wall Street Journal* survey estimates that 57 percent of those people who regularly surf the Web live in the United States. Only 1 percent live in the Middle East, 1 percent in Africa, and 5 percent in Latin America. In these regions, only affluent elites have access to the information that the Internet provides. The emergence of what political writer Andrew Sullivan calls "dot.communism," in which universal access to the Internet's plethora of free information, goods, and services creates genuine political equality, at least in cyberspace, is far from a reality.

The transitology literature, then, overestimates the transformative potential of third wave democratization. It exaggerates the degree to which deep historical divisions within countries can be crafted out of existence by the correct decisions of democratizing elites. And it uses as a model Spain's transition, which on closer inspection looks exceptional, with favorable conditions impossible to match in most other new democracies.

Global Economic Trends

In addition to these problems, the transitology literature fails to link democratic transitions with changes taking place in the global economy. While some economic changes facilitate openness, transnational networking, and similar developments supportive of democracy, others severely restrict the choices of governments in developing countries.

Beginning in the 1980s, the so-called "Washington Consensus," or neoliberal orthodoxy, came to dominate official thinking about economic development in the U.S. government, the IMF and World Bank, and private banks and foundations. The Washington Consensus requires sharp attacks on fiscal deficits (and therefore cuts in government spending), financial liberalization (letting the market determine interest rates), trade liberalization (lowering tariffs and other barriers), privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation, and more rigorous enforcement of property rights, including intellectual property rights. The supremacy of the market is aggressively asserted over all other values, and the supposedly "statist" policies of the past are characterized *tout court* as failures. In the words of political scientist Benjamin Barber, the triumph of market ideology means "no government intervention (however mild) is safe from criticism, and no market mechanism (however violent and unjust) is subject to rebuke."

Powerful international forces push developing countries to adopt a single prescription

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for their economic troubles, one that leaves them, especially the smaller ones, with little room for alternative policies. The preeminence of the market was reflected in terminology—developing countries became "emerging markets" in much of the literature, as if their only importance was as an open field for the exports and investments of rich countries. The fact that so many third wave democracies emerged precisely during the rise of the Washington Consensus meant, paradoxically, that their ability to manage their own economies was markedly curtailed. They became, in the words of Malawian political scientist Thandika Mkandawire, "choiceless democracies." They are so indebted to and dependent on international financial institutions that they are not really free to make basic democratic decisions about which of their goods and services are to be allocated through the price mechanism and which are not, how certain markets should be regulated, or how their economic reforms should be carried out.

The U.S. government, or at least parts of it, led the way in the forging of the Washington consensus. What the economist Jagdish Bhagwati calls the "Wall Street-Treasury complex" has been firmly in control of U.S. policy, insisting that any government's attempt to limit the mobility of capital is unacceptable, that developing countries should seek always to privatize their industries and lower tariffs, that the intellectual property rights of U.S. firms must take precedence over local needs, and that top priority must always be given to the wishes of the largest financial conglomerates and multinational corporations.

In its foreign economic policy, the United States has rarely deviated from the Wall Street-Treasury Department line. With a single-mindedness that would make the old *apparatchiks* of the Soviet Union proud, U.S. trade officials, State Department employees, and USAID technicians repeat the mantra in international conferences and in the capitals of developing countries: governments should be minimally involved in the economy; even surplus-generating state enterprises should be privatized; social goals should not be taken into account when evaluating government performance. The only acceptable criterion of state reform is efficiency, measured by the bottom line of the business world; government should not seek to protect an over-arching public interest distinct from the preferences aggregated by the market—indeed, there is no public interest distinct from the market; the U.S. government should aggressively represent the interests of U.S. exporters, investors, and other companies (who after all bankroll its elected representatives) rather than the whole of its population, and changes in developing countries should be evaluated solely in terms of the opportunities they provide to those interests. The relentless repetition of this economic formula does not amount to genuine global leadership. It is a politically unsophisticated form of salesmanship that looks hypocritical, since the U.S. government continues to maintain protectionist barriers against developing country exports in agriculture and other sectors.

The view of politics fostered by the Washington Consensus is a utilitarian one. Democracy is seen as useful because it can generate the marketizing and commercializing changes that are "necessary" for the world economy. But democratic politics is feared as well as desired, because it gives rise to views opposed to the consensus. For this reason, much of the writing about the global economy from Washington these days uses the term "governance" rather than "politics." The difference is telling. Governance refers to the administration of people and things. Politics signifies engagement in political affairs. The first assumes that the challenge facing the world economy is to make the management of the status quo more efficient; it takes the dominance of the current orthodoxy for granted. The second allows for conflict between fundamentally different visions and parties; it is open to the possibility of new political winners and meaningful change.

As the last century began, socialist and other radical movements were attempting to democratize politics at the national level by applying the principles of parliamentary democracy to the management of the "commanding heights" of the economy. Today, the terminology is different, and no one is seriously talking about eliminating markets.

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But many social movements are engaged in a similar project at a global level, attempting to apply the principles of parliamentary democracy to the institutions that manage the international economy. This is the logical next step in the struggle for democracy, which alone can sustain the third wave of democratization.

Whenever new forms of political authority are consolidated, social movements can open new space for democratic contestation. With the rise of nation-states in Europe after the French Revolution, domestic movements with their tactics of strikes, petitions, demonstrations, and marches were born. When the political form of the nation-state was carried by European powers to Africa and Asia, those colonized people used the rhetoric of European nationalism to win their own political independence. And as globalization proceeds, new social movements are emerging, capable at the very least of stopping the most egregious corporate and governmental manipulations. Global institutions such as the WTO should not be opposed *in toto*, but reformed and used as structures within which democratization can take place. A retreat into fortified, nationalist, autarchic states would probably be the worst thing that could happen to democracy in the world today.

The goal of nineteenth-century radicals still lies visible on the horizon in the twenty-first century. The commanding heights of the global economy are still run by small oligopolies of "Davos men": people, corporations, and states rich enough to have an influence on the rules of the game. On the board of the International Monetary Fund, for example, two-thirds of the voting rights are in the hands of representatives of the United States, Japan, and Europe, who speak for less than one-eighth of the world's population. Global grassroots movements might be able to force this and other institutions to move closer to the principles of universal suffrage and democracy, and thus produce a more humane global economy. The managers of the global institutions of "governance," and the corporate and state interests that prop them up, will not accede to change without a fight. But the fight is well worth the effort.

The market is not sacrosanct. People can socialize it so that human values help to determine the conditions of production and the allocation of goods and services. But they can only do that by questioning and challenging the vision of economic and political change promoted by those who run the world's economy. Advocates of democracy need to transcend the narrow confines of the transitology approach and take account of the global economic environment in which democratic transitions do, or do not, take place. Democracy is increasingly about who makes the global rules, not just about who replaces authoritarian leaders in individual countries. ●

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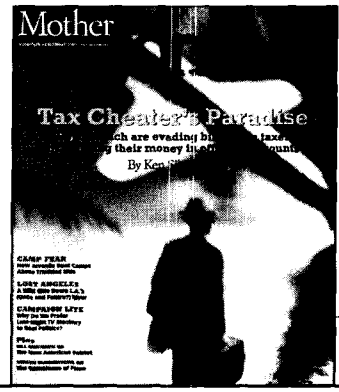

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On the American Working Class

Introduction by Ronald Aronson

Jean-Paul Sartre

In early 1945, with the war not yet over, Jean-Paul Sartre visited the United States for the first time. He traveled with a group of correspondents who were invited for the sake of influencing French public opinion favorably toward the United States.[1] *Sartre was sent by his friend Albert Camus to report back to* Combat, *the leading newspaper of the independent left that had emerged from the Resistance. Once invited, he arranged also to report back to the conservative newspaper* Le Figaro. *Simone de Beauvoir said that learning of Camus's invitation in late 1944 was one of the most exciting moments of Sartre's life.*[2]

Known before the war for Nausea *(1938) and* The Wall *(1939), Sartre's reputation had grown with the performance of* The Flies *and* No Exit *during the Occupation, and with the publication of* Being and Nothingness *during the same period. He had also made several contributions to* Les Lettres Françaises, *like* Combat *published clandestinely. During the Paris uprising in August 1944, with* Combat *now appearing openly, Camus gave Sartre the opportunity to make his presence felt in the daily press, commissioning him to write a series of articles about the liberation. Although Sartre was the first writer to have a byline in* Combat, *Beauvoir reported to her biographer that it was she and not Sartre who wrote these well-known articles, because "he was too busy."*[3] *If he missed his first chance to communicate with a mass audience, during the euphoric months to follow Sartre made his presence felt with two major articles,* "The Republic of Silence," *published in the liberation issue of* Les Lettres Françaises, *and* "A More Precise Clarification of Existentialism" *in the communist weekly* Action. *And now, as 1945 loomed, having just announced the project of creating a new journal and articulated his theme of the writer's commitment, he would have the opportunity once more to influence the broad public by writing for the daily press.*

The seven articles that follow are among the last of the thirty-two Sartre wrote about his American trip. Twenty were published in Combat *(February 2 to June 30), a dozen in* Le Figaro *(January 24 to July 30).*[4] *Seven of the articles from* Le Figaro *(gathered as* "Individualism and Conformism in the United States" *and* "American Cities") *were published in* Situations III *and later translated into English in* Literary and Philosophical Essays. *But none of the* Combat *articles has ever been republished in French or translated into any other language. The articles on the U. S. working class appeared several weeks after Sartre's return home in May, appearing from June 6 to June 30, 1945. They are remarkable for a number of reasons. The reader will notice, first of all, how lively and interesting they are. According to his biographer, Camus was "distressed to discover that the rival paper got Sartre's report on the liveliness of American cities while* his *paper received a study of the economy of the Tennessee Valley Authority."*[5] *This may reflect the distorting retrospective thrown on virtually every aspect of the Sartre-Camus relationship after their break. In fact, virtually all the articles—and especially the descriptions of and reflections on the American working class—are accessible and fascinating, just the kind of fare* Combat's *educated audience would have feasted on. Notice also Sartre's eye for detail, his power to construct interesting chains of ideas, and his penchant to generalize sweepingly from limited experience and observation—Sartre spoke no English, and his conversations and interviews required the services of a translator.*

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Their strengths are especially striking because these are the articles of a tyro. In them Sartre is breaking new ground in at least three respects: not only is this his first journalistic writing, but it is also his first attempt at sustained social and political analysis. Moreover, these are his first writings influenced by Marxist ideas: he stresses the centrality of social class, the alienating effect of industrial labor, the exploitation of the workers, and the question of workers' organization and ideology. It is noteworthy that Sartre's first genuinely political writing as well as his first sociological observation took place not in France, but in the United States. It seems that the United States was the laboratory where he first acted on the idea of commitment that he was just then developing. Away from his French environment for several months and detached from the attitudes and practices of political noninvolvement that had marked his first forty years, Sartre may have felt free to act as an engaged political intellectual. Across the ocean from the French Marxists he had recently encountered, he was now trying out Marxism as the main prism for focusing on a series of new experiences.[6] *On this trip, he paid his first visits to factories and had his first conversations with workers and trade unionists.*

Sartre's main concern in these articles is that American workers, though no less exploited or alienated than French workers, nevertheless did not share their experience, values, or social and political outlook. They lacked class consciousness and identified with their bosses and nation rather than their fellow workers elsewhere–which is to say, they accepted capitalism. Why was this so? These articles are an inquiry into American exceptionalism. Sartre raises this central theme in a wide variety of ways, discussing food and dress, American informality and social mobility, workers' attitudes toward employers, their individualism, and the absence of socialist movements. He touches only briefly on race relations in these articles, but will return to the issue in the final two articles on his American trip, published in July in Le Figaro. *In all these discussions, one can see Sartre thinking about the French working class—perhaps for the first time—as he learns and writes about American workers.*

Ronald Aronson teaches at Wayne State University and is currently writing about the Camus-Sartre relationship. He is the author of *After Marxism* and several works on Sartre.

American Workers Are Not Yet Proletarians

San Francisco: In my presence they interviewed a liberal journalist from Baltimore about the situation of the American working class. He answered all questions willingly, but he seemed so obviously puzzled that I finally asked him what befuddled him so: "It's because you Frenchmen talk about the American working class as if it really existed," he replied.

Indeed, there is no doubt that the concept of class is foreign to American thinking. Once I even heard some old ladies declare that "the workers had profited the most from the war," and that "their wives now bought chicken and silk stockings." But these remarks, heard regularly in France after World War I, are definitely not the rule here. According to the average American, what separates the blue-collar worker from his white-collar employer is a difference in the nature of their work, but not class. In France, many bourgeois also prefer to ignore the reality of the working class.

What is important is that here a worker never considers himself a "proletarian" in the European sense of the word. An American, perfectly fluent in French, told me just yesterday that the term "worker" (which could be translated as "*travailleur*") has no equivalent in French because of the very specific connotations it possesses. Of course there is no doubt that in America, as in France, a "worker" is a wage earner, that is, a man who hires out his productive power and who owns neither the instruments nor the product of his labor. But if in that sense he remains the victim of the capitalist system, everything is organized in such a way that he is rarely conscious of it. This is the fact that has struck me the most during this trip.

How Kaiser Financed His Hospitals

In America, there is no generalized system of socialized medicine. Everything depends on

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the states and private initiative. It is one of the reasons for the disarray that typified the thirties: the government was taken aback because there was no federal organization to take care of the unemployed, specifically in California where there is no state health insurance. At the beginning of the war, when [Henry J.] Kaiser established his enormous shipyards, which employed more than 100,000 workers, he was confronted with a very practical problem: in order to obtain the highest productivity from this enormous crowd of workers, he had to take care of their health. Therefore he created, with Dr. Garfield's help, the famous Kaiser hospital, whose reputation has spread throughout the United States.

This hospital is financed as follows: Kaiser put up $700,000, part of which by the way was lent to him by the federal government. But, at the same time, he deducted 50 cents per week from the wages of all those workers who wanted to benefit from these medical services; 63 percent of the workers accepted, which provided a weekly sum of $31,500. Kaiser was reimbursed in six months, and since the deductions continued to come in, he was able to build a second hospital, even bigger than the first. There are now 650 beds and 80 doctors and surgeons, all paid for by the weekly deductions of the subscribers.

In addition, even though the number of workers at Kaiser has dropped significantly, the money keeps coming in: they are now planning a training center for nurses as well as a medical research center for which they intend to hand out eight yearly scholarships of $5,000.

"Who Pays for All This?"—"Mr. Kaiser Does!"

Of course, the two hospitals and everything in them belong to the workers. It is they and no one else who pay the doctors and the nurses: it is with their money that research scholarships will be offered to young doctors. But—and this is what I wanted to get to— in these factories where the big left-wing union, the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations], has a significant number of members and where the communists exercise a considerable influence, nobody is conscious of the fact that the totality of these health facilities are the exclusive property of the workers.

Kaiser himself presides over these hospitals, and the vice-presidents of these organizations are doctors, selected by him, together with perhaps one or two representatives from the city of San Francisco, but not one is a worker. There is no workers' control whatsoever and not even a consultative committee. It is as if the workers had paid for the total cost of these facilities and then, out of indifference, had donated them to their employer.

When I visited the hospital, I had already been informed of this state of affairs; however, I said nothing. On the contrary, I asked our guide, an engineer: "Who is paying for all this?" And he answered, honestly surprised, "But, Mr. Kaiser!" A little later, on the construction site, I had somebody ask a worker who the hospital belonged to and he answered quietly, "It's Kaiser's."

This mind-set can in part be explained by the fact that many Kaiser workers come from the Southwest; they are day workers from the countryside who come to work in the factories for six months or one year, attracted by the high wages. Upon their arrival, they discover an existing, perfectly organized health facility. Since the amount deducted from their wages is very small, and the advantages they enjoy considerable, it appears to them quite simply that all that is asked of them is a small fee in exchange for the services they receive.

Their attitude is ultimately understandable. But it is surprising that the union leaders or the communists don't try to make them understand that they have a claim to those hospitals and that, in a capitalist society, they own these facilities just as Kaiser owns his factory.

A Doctor Praises the System

I put the same question to a hospital doctor; he is a left-wing militant and an intelligent, capable, and energetic man who is totally devoted to the workers' cause, and he seemed surprised.

"It's odd," he told me, "but all European visitors are equally amazed and indignant."

"Because," I told him, "the European working class has a clearer understanding of its rights."

"But that's absurd," he answered. "What can we do? Kaiser would never have accepted

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worker participation in the hospital's administration. Therefore, should we have sabotaged the undertaking? Look at the tremendous advantages it provides to our workers: last week a woman came in for a consultation; there was blood in her urine. A private doctor would have charged her $10 for this examination. Diagnosis: tuberculosis in her right kidney. It will require a $500 operation: here everything is free. Don't forget also that when a worker is hired, there never is a medical examination. Therefore it often happens that we look after workers whose diseases were contracted well before they were hired by Kaiser. And on top of that, it represents a terrible blow to private medicine. As you know, in America health is "big business" [in English in the text]; doctors are very expensive, and we have encountered terrible resistance from the American Medical Association. After the war, when the shipyards lost a lot of their importance, Kaiser's plan was to interest all the region's industrial enterprises in his hospital. That's how he will have contributed to the growth of socialized medicine."

What to answer him? That health care that is in the service of the big capitalists is not exactly socialized medicine? What would have been the use? What strikes me especially is that here workers do not have a sense of collective property. Since they do not own the hospitals as individuals, they immediately assume that they are the boss's personal property, that's how far removed they are from adopting a socialist point of view. And, finally, the manner in which they permit this hospital—that belongs to them—to be filched reminds me a little of what happens in the case of what is called in economics texts "profit." The worker is happy to be paid a wage. On the one hand, he can lay full claim to the product of his labor, but on the other, he is content with a lifetime interest in a medical facility that is properly his. In both cases, the plunder occurs with his consent.

I let my opinion be known to a worker in Detroit who replied, "I know, but what can we do? At international meetings, worker delegates from Europe often criticize American workers for not expressing solidarity with the international proletarians but that's because you are not aware of our situation; we are not yet proletarians." And he added bitterly, "Unfortunately!" This is the situation that I will try to explain in these articles.

—*Combat*, June 6, 1945

The United States: A Country of Settlers

San Francisco: The American worker is not conscious of being riveted to his condition in the way his French or British comrades are. He is just "passing through."

When discussing Kaiser's factories, I referred to the considerable number of workers who are in reality day workers from Texas and Oklahoma and are here to make in two or three years the small amount of money necessary to buy a plot of land and start out on their own. During their stay in the city, they retain their peasant mentality: they seem like aliens to their worker buddies; their hopes and their deepest memories are attached to the earth and the fields; they hire themselves out, but they don't give themselves.

"Open Societies"

Besides, nowhere else is the small farmers'[7] misery greater than in certain areas of Texas or New Mexico; as a consequence, for the day workers that come from there, becoming part of the working class represents an incredible improvement in their condition and approximates the attainment of bourgeois respectability. But of course they do not represent the majority. Except for those who were born of working-class parents and have worked in factories since their adolescence, the American class system appears, in [Henri] Bergson's words, like an "open society."

Until the relatively recent period of massive immigration, immense regions remained undeveloped in this country, and natural resources greatly surpassed their potential for exploitation. In other regions, industrial progress and mechanization of agriculture allowed for the opening of new factories overnight, and as a result there was a continuous influx of foreign workers: the most recent arrivals were seen as the proletarians.

Upon arrival, the immigrants initially accepted their inferior jobs and low salaries. They

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largely retained the memory of the miserable existence they had fled and which made their present condition look like a paradise and, just as important, for them this condition was temporary. The point was to get a foothold in America and to be tolerated. Indeed, twenty years later, they had climbed one or two rungs up the social ladder, pushed up by new arrivals who replaced them in the low-paying jobs and who had to climb up the social ladder in turn. This is what allows [André] Siegfried to remark:

> The cotton industry in Massachusetts has in the last seventy-five years seen the character of its workers change several times. Towards 1870, the Irish and Scots still represented the majority; but since then, even though their numbers have not significantly declined, their relative place has undergone a strong decline, while they have tended to migrate towards the highly technical positions.
>
> Pressure from below obliged them to climb up the ladder. From 1870 to approximately 1880 a massive number of French-Canadians arrived. At the end of the decade, this group alone surpassed in number all other foreign nationalities. In accordance with their seniority, they succeeded in occupying all sorts of positions at all levels. Besides, they no longer occupied the bottom rung because in the last decade of the century, the heavy jobs were passed on to an improbable and colorful collection of Poles, Portuguese, Syrians, Greeks, and Russians. . .[8]

Hence class characteristics interfere with national ones: in 1920, a worker no longer knows whether he is a proletarian because he belongs by birth to the proletariat or because he is an Irishman who just got off the boat. On the other hand, national and religious solidarities persist for a long time among immigrants and explain the existence of those innumerable Irish, Jewish, Mexican, and Chinese neighborhoods that function as barriers and blind them to class solidarity.

Those Who Forged Their Own Destiny

Besides, these men have accepted their destiny and are proudly aware of having forged it themselves: they fled the miseries of Europe and in advance accepted a few difficult years in a new country which did not welcome them but in which they were sure to find their place. While a worker in France, born whether he wanted to or not in a secular proletariat, sees all horizons blocked from the start and learns as a child from bitter experience that his fate is tied to the entire working class, these men have freely accepted exiling themselves and have retained the impression of having "chosen" their fate. In America they did not experience that hopeless hereditary oppression that weighs on the European proletariat. Instead of having the stifling feeling of being swallowed up by an overwhelming destiny, they have acquired a kind of individualistic sense of their personal dignity because even if they are laborers or semi-skilled, they know they have come to find their destiny on the other side of the ocean and they consider themselves responsible for it.

Of course, strictly speaking, this is true only for the immigrants of the first generation; but they raised their children with these sentiments, and Protestant individualism is responsible for the rest.

The Beginning of Americanization

America is a colonized country, and I would compare the American workers quite willingly to our French settlers in Morocco. In spite of the obvious and profound differences, they have the same consciousness of having established themselves freely in their place of work, and the result has been the same devotion to energy and action and the same profound conservatism.

The extraordinary opportunities many of them have encountered persuaded them that success depended on them. They did not understand that they were benefiting from an exceptional economic situation that was the result of the fact that America is a rich but underpopulated country. They attributed this state of affairs to the political constitution and to America's public spirit. And that was the beginning of the process of Americanization: without being intellectually and critically minded individualists, they acquired a professional individualism.

—*Combat*, June 7, 1945

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The American Worker Eats Just as Well as His Boss And Heinz Produces 57 Varieties of Canned Foods for Its Fellow Citizens

NEW YORK: Here people say regularly that the poorest American believes deep down that he can become a Rockefeller or move into the White House. Perhaps this is somewhat less true since the 1930s depression, but up until then this feeling was indeed quite widespread.

In this respect people pointed out a very important fact to me: at the beginning of that terrible depression, when millions of workers and employees found themselves out of work overnight, it was very difficult to persuade many of them to register at the unemployment office: they were ashamed. They were so used to counting on themselves that they were unable to see themselves as innocent victims of a collective catastrophe. It seemed to them that their misfortune was their own fault and that they had not been sufficiently clever or hardworking. Unable to grasp the meaning of collective property or of a collective event, how could they have been aware of the collective nature of their condition?

The Minimum Wage

I must admit that their standard of living, especially today, blinds them to their real problems. Of course, one must not exaggerate: there are still, if one includes the blacks, millions of workers whose wages are below the poverty line. About a month and a half ago, the federal government raised the minimum wage to 55 cents per hour; it had been 50 cents, which means that there were still a lot of people in America who made less than $100 per month. This is especially the case for workers in small shops and department stores as well as laundry workers, etc. But the "real" workers: the steel workers, the miners, mechanics, and so on, enjoy a much higher standard of living and they are far more numerous than those underprivileged ones.

A 1945 advertisement for Heinz products. Courtesy of the Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pa.

One Unmarried Worker in Fontana Village

Take as an example the Fontana Dam being constructed by the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority]. Its workers make on the average six dollars per day. The legal work week is 40 hours and overtime is paid at one-and-a-half times the regular rate. The monthly wages range roughly from $330 to $360 a month and they are far from being the highest in America. At the official exchange rate of 50 francs to the dollar, they are making between 16,500 Frs. and 18,000 Frs. per month. But since life is nevertheless more expensive in America than in France (if one ignores for a moment the black market), it is better to evaluate the buying

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power this income confers on the worker.

Let us suppose he is unmarried because today everybody works in America, and if he is married, his wife's pay is added to his. He lives in Fontana Village, an artificial community made up of those "prefabricated houses" [in English in the text] which I talked about elsewhere. It is furnished and has three bedrooms, a kitchen, and bathroom, and he pays $31 per month rent. The furniture is ordinary, but completely new: it reminded me of the furniture from Dufayel, Bûcheron, or the Galeries Barbès. There are couches, leather arm chairs, an electric oven, and a fridge.

This "housing" [in English in the text] policy is advantageous to the bosses: they are not out of pocket, because their enterprise is profitable and the workers rent from them and live on their property, which allows them to better control them. But it is also to the workers' advantage: they live in the most amazing comfort and it does not cost them too much.

Our "proletarian" buys his groceries in general food stores situated in the village itself and set up in agreement with the industry boss, and those stores sell him their wares at very low prices. If he prefers to eat out, he can eat for 40 cents in the enterprise's cafeteria.

I have often eaten in these "cafeterias": there is lots of food and it is good. At the entrance, there is a reminder that the country is at war and the customers are asked not to order more food than they can eat: a clear indication that no one is starving to death. Life is so standardized here that I found no significant difference between the menus of the luxury restaurants and the canteens. In restaurants, you pay mostly for the cutlery, the service, and the atmosphere, but no matter where you go you find, whether it is in the "Automats" or the dining room of the great hotels, the same green peas whose color is so garish that you think they were hand-painted, the same unsalted white beans which are served in little dishes, the same brown and odd-looking gravy; it is semi-sweet, semi-salty, and they spread it on a refrigerated piece of beef, and especially the same canned foods Heinz provides to all of America—its 57 varieties of canned foods allow it to play a great role as equalizer. To finish up, the worker, just like his boss, eats a big piece of sponge cake with cream or an "ice cream" [in English in the text]. They drink the same chlorinated ice water and the same bad coffee.

The Worker's Budget

As a consequence, the worker seldom has the dim but haunting notion that the rich bourgeois American eats luxurious meals that he has to do without. For $30 or $40 a month he can eat the same food as "everybody" else, that food that is so American and that one finds from one end of the United States to the other and at all levels of society and which is presumably rich in vitamins but has so few that after their meals most people take vitamin pills apparently made especially to be swallowed rapidly and casually by people in a hurry.

Now we have spent $60 to $70; take out $20 to $30 for taxes, $60 to $70 for war bonds (the worker considers buying war bonds a patriotic duty and spends regularly 15 percent to 20 percent of his wages on them). This still leaves the worker $180 to $200 for clothes, miscellaneous expenses, and going out. If he wants to, he can become a shareholder and participate, to a certain degree, in the life of American capital.[9]

—*Combat*, June 9, 1945

"Hello, Jim," Says Chicago's Bishop to the School's Janitor. "Hello, Bishop!" Answers the Janitor.

NEW YORK: The figures I have provided on the American worker's living conditions should allow the reader to understand to what degree his mentality differs from his European comrade's.

Some time ago, a sociologist who was trying to describe the consumer habits of the French worker stressed the fact that the working class spent the smallest part of its budget on housing and clothes and the largest part on food. As a consequence, he indicated that most proletarian families were crammed into slums and that the worker abandoned family life in order to find in the street the social life that is indispensable to the most solitary individual.

There is nothing comparable to this in America's case: undoubtedly one still encoun-

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ters slums in the overpopulated Northeast, but decentralization and the "housing" [in English in the text] policy implemented by the government and management have reversed the situation. As we have seen, the worker spends as much, if not more, on housing as he does on food. That means that the American "proletariat" can enjoy a home life.

The "Community House"

Hence, it is not surprising that in each of the artificially created settlements near the big construction sites a "community house" [in English in the text] has been built, a huge shed composed of wooden boards where the workers get together after their work to smoke, read, and chat, and it is not surprising that the crowd gathering there at night resembles the people we encounter in working-class neighborhoods in our industrialized cities, but the resemblance is superficial: these halls created by the state's or the boss's paternalism preserve a puritanical air. Drinking doesn't take place there; playing rarely does. Tired and silent men dream there, alone or in small groups. One doesn't sense the presence of those powerful social forces that throng the streets and workers' cafés in Europe.

Also, the "community house" is mainly frequented by unmarried men who prefer that kind of "shared solitude" to complete loneliness.

In Public the American Worker Cannot Be Distinguished from the Bourgeois

The married workers live at home, just like the bourgeois; family life is just as important as his professional life. Similarly, in the cities' working-class neighborhoods, the streets do not look like our streets: you don't linger in them as we do for the joy of sensing oneself overwhelmed by a great unanimous wave: you cross them very quickly in order to go to work or go home.

As you know, the Belgian writer [Hendrik] de Man spoke in the books he wrote before World War II of the presence of a certain "inferiority complex" in the European worker who sensed that he did not possess any specifically bourgeois values.[10] Here, nothing like that exists; the worker does not feel that he stands out because of the way he is dressed.

The numerous factories we visited struck me by their cleanliness: they resemble offices more closely than our dark and dirty factories: the workers are properly clothed, the women are attractively made up, they wear baseball caps and long cotton pants, and colorful blouses.

After work, the worker puts on a nice ready-made suit which is comparable to millions of the same suits manufactured in America because it is nearly impossible, especially today, for women and men to order clothes that are made-to-measure. There is a "Heinz" for clothes as there is for food.

In the street, you cannot tell the difference between a worker and a bourgeois; same outfit, same easy and nonchalant demeanor: the exterior class indications are nonexistent.

American Equality

This apparent equality also shows up in their public behavior: why should the worker, the elevator attendant, the delivery boy be hostile to, or intimidated by, his boss or a rich customer? They think that what he is today, they will perhaps be tomorrow. The boss has been luckier than they are, that's all. And the bourgeois encourage this kind of familiarity, whose equivalent is found nowhere in Europe: first of all it is useful to them because it hides the profound differences of condition, but above all because they are very sincerely proud of American "equality."

Maybe they are more easily fooled than others. But this truly human kindness that pervades class relationships is surely one of the most charming and spontaneous characteristics of the United States.

In a restaurant, the waitress jokes with the customer, she teases him: if he comes back, she waves at him from afar as if he were an old acquaintance. Neither in stores nor in hotels is anyone obsequious; rather they are kindly and gruff in their approach. Taxi drivers become involved in the conversations of their passengers in the backseat of their cab.

Monsignor Shell, Chicago's bishop, was kind enough to show me around his school: in the gym we ran into the old caretaker, who was busily working. "Hello, Jim," said the bishop.

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And the caretaker, without turning around, tossed back at him, "Hello, Bishop!"

The Situation of the "Intellectuals"

The laborers and those who work in small shops do not have the impression that they are selling their labor but rather that they are performing a service; hence, most of them are, without ulterior motives, proud of their high wages. If you really want to talk about a complex, it would be better to talk about their superiority complex in respect to intellectuals, who after studying for ten years make less money than they do.

Recently, a French professor was on a boat with some twenty workers who were going back to America after having built a floating harbor somewhere on the European coast. They spoke to him in a friendly but disdainful manner.

"What," they said, "you studied so long and you make so little?" And they added proudly, "We, we never studied at all."

And, showing their hands, they remarked, "That's what we make our living with."

If they are upset by the huge salary of a Hollywood star or a radio singer, it is not because these amounts are high but because it seems to them that all these people are paid to do nothing.

Americans First

A French worker is definitely proud to be a manual laborer, but he affirms the superiority of his work all the more violently because the bourgeois hardly believe in it while they pretend to be the repositories of traditions, culture, and luxury to which he in principle has no access.

In the U.S.A., everybody is in agreement: this civilization is dominated by technology and it respects foremost the technician and the specialized worker. Cultural values follow far behind, and as far as traditions go, there are none. As a consequence, the American worker is not familiar with that internationalism based on poverty which before the war united the European proletariat. The famous cry, "Proletarians of the world, unite!" leaves him cold. He is first of all an American.

—*Combat*, June 10-11, 1945

A Sadness Composed of Fatigue and Boredom Weighs on American Factory Workers

NEW YORK: The American worker does not recognize his own suffering in that of his European brethren. He is inclined to attribute it to a lack of organization, and, if he thinks about it, he takes pride in his own country with its high salaries, its comfortable housing, its freedom and equality. And when he discerns the relationship between his high wages and the general prosperity of the U.S.A., he expresses solidarity with capitalism: it is within the framework of the capitalist system that he wants to improve conditions.

"Did You See Our Willow Run Plant?"

Before Roosevelt, many skilled workers voted for the Republican Party, which stood for large, organized production and had as its goal the increase of the nation's material wealth. In general, that American worker is proud of his country's riches, its overwhelming industrial power, and the scientific progress it accomplishes every day.

In Detroit, local CIO leaders asked me, glowing with pride, "Did you see *our* Willow Run plant?" (These are Henry Ford's main factories), just as the bourgeois of Amiens might ask before the war, "Did you see *our* cathedral?"

I have difficulty imagining the same pride in a French union leader working for Michelin or Goodrich. But, an American feels as if the factory in which he works is "his own"; not that he participates in the profits or in its management for all that, but he considers himself a beneficiary of the cleanliness and hygiene that is strictly maintained in the workplace: every day, he is joyfully amazed over the most recent technological improvements. He even participates in them.

In most factories, initiatives and criticisms by the personnel are encouraged. If a worker invents a device that can improve the output or save time, they reserve a place of honor for it and his picture is displayed at the entry of the factory. All this allows one to understand that socialism has made no inroads into the American masses. The only attempts to create a socialist party were made in the agrarian Northwest and not in the East or in the indus-

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trialized Northeast; besides, these attempts have failed.

The Fear of Marxism

In the big cities, especially in San Francisco, there are a few communist cells. But the communists daren't speak their name: they hide under such fancy names as "progressives" or "reformers"; they lead a semiclandestine existence. Marxism, about which the immense majority of Americans don't know the first thing, is America's bogey man. Hundreds of times during this trip, in every kind of place, I have been asked in a genuinely apprehensive tone, "Is it true that France will fall to the communists?"

In the CIO, the most progressive labor union, there is a noisy and active minority who periodically demand the expulsion of the Marxists. What the workers especially fear is socialist policies that will reduce their standard of living and compromise America's prosperity. What estranges them from communism is their professional individualism.

In sum, the American worker "needs" capitalism; his attitude is firmly evolutionary and progressive, he rejects everything that smells of revolution. Rationalist optimism permeates him since it is one of *the* characteristics of Americanism that there is no problem that cannot be solved using common sense, goodwill, and mutual concessions.

The Mechanization of Labor

Can we say therefore, as some people maintain, that America is a worker's paradise and that goodwill and solidarity reign between management and the proletariat? If that were only the case!

First of all, the mechanization of labor has been pushed so far that the worker has lost all interest in what he does. He may well be proud of his factory, in the manner that we are proud of our works of art, but in his shop or construction site he suffers from the same sense of hopeless boredom that is now typical of the workers in our overrationalized industries. The "joy of working" is just about completely foreign to him: and his time at work is a waste of a part his life; he sacrifices it to earn a living.

A young worker said before me, "A JOB [in English in the original] is work that one doesn't like."

There is a distinct sadness among the American working masses: it is composed of fatigue, boredom, and dreams. At night, the worker hurries off to the movies in order to get away and forget a long, inhuman day of work.

The movies play a social role here: many Americans call them the opium of the people.

It's because work, especially now during the war, has become a hell: it is not only completely mechanized, but management in agreement with the government has increased the output of the human machine to the maximum. In all factories, the number of operations that a worker must perform in one hour is rigorously determined. And it goes up from year to year.

A Fifteen-Minute Break Every Two Hours

The constantly increasing demands from management are at the origin of numerous conflicts. The worker is conscious of his exhaustion and that he is becoming an automaton. For two-thirds of the day, he is reduced to a series of identical gestures and his work is constantly speeded up and he is more and more hurried.

In a factory I visited it is customary to grant the worker a fifteen-minute break every two hours. That is how they hope to increase his productivity, because during the two hours that he is working, he does not have the right either to smoke or raise his head.

I walked through the shops during the fifteen-minute break and I was struck by the gloomy stupor that showed on their faces. Everybody remained at his place, alone and in silence: most of them did not even smoke. They rolled a cigarette between their fingers but they did not even think of lighting it. They appeared to be plunged in a kind of nothingness in order "to recover their strength" from within the very depth of their being. Rather than speaking of fifteen minutes of rest, one should call it fifteen minutes of death.

—*Combat*, June 12, 1945

Since the Depression of the Thirties, the American Worker Lives in Fear of Being Unemployed One Day

NEW YORK: I have spoken of the pride with

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which the American workers showed off their high wages. But they have to protect these high wages constantly. The cost of living is rising: they have to fight in order to obtain raises that are in proportion. Often the conflicts are quite violent.

But the big fear of the American proletariat is to be unemployed. In that respect, the disastrous experience of the thirties has had a decisive impact. For the American people who had never known an economic crisis— at least not a crisis of such magnitude—it struck them like the revelation of evil. Few events have had such an impact on the history of the United States.

The working people feel profoundly terrorized; they may be enjoying an easy and luxurious existence but they sense that it may well be ephemeral and they do not abandon themselves to it with confidence. Tomorrow, when the soldiers come back from the war and industry will be placed on a peacetime footing, the workers may be out on the street without a penny. And the feeling that their situation is precarious may well be their greatest anxiety.

Last September, when all of America anticipated the swift collapse of the German Army, a genuine panic occurred among the workers, and many quit their jobs in the war factories in order to find as quickly as possible a job in peacetime industries. One can sense that they are ready to do anything in order to avoid a return to the dark days of the 1930s.

I do not know if this is really management's intention, but it is true that in regard to their workers they practice a policy of enlightened despotism. The most progressive ones among the lot are completely in favor of improving the proletariat's condition where feasible. Henry Ford was the first to adopt the so-called "policy of high wages": since then, it has been imitated by the entire United States, and, as we know, Kaiser established a hospital with great effort. But they expect these improvements to be initiated by management: a lot is done for the worker, but it is not done by the worker.

Nowhere else but in America has it been so difficult to establish unions. The employers have fought them off violently. Not so long ago Henry Ford employed a team of boxers [goons] to beat up the striking workers. Before 1936, management frequently fired workers suspected of belonging to "unions" [in English in the text].

Together with the CIO, radical movie makers have produced an unusual film, *Our Native Land*, which I saw in a private showing; it describes the bitter and often bloody battles the unions had to undertake in order to be officially recognized. This film is already quite old, but it was officially withdrawn one week after it was shown in public. It shows strikes, bloody clashes, and lockouts and makes you grasp better this profound American contradiction: America is the most optimistic country in the world; its people have always considered war an avoidable accident and the use of force an unjustifiable tactic, but it is also a country that contains, in a latent state, the greatest possibilities for violence.

Management Against the Unions

Management has done what it could to imprison the worker in his so-called individual "freedom." Even today, many bosses are resolutely opposed to unions.

On April 9, B.E. Hutchison, vice president of the Chrysler Corporation and director of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the most conservative management organization, stated that its committees were studying a plan whose preliminary outlines had been submitted to the Chamber of Commerce. It requests that it be declared illegal for workers' unions to prevent the adoption of modern techniques whose purpose it is to improve production and to call wildcat and illegal strikes. It also demands that the individual worker's rights against the unions be protected and he be permitted to work "without fear of any molestation or forms of violence exercised against his person or his property."

The Chamber of Commerce has not yet acknowledged this proposal, which would, if adopted, practically withdraw the right to strike from the unions and turn the workers away from union membership. But many fear that the return of the soldiers, the threat of unemployment, and the actions of conservative elements will, after the war, provoke in America a violent, anti-union movement. The tension between labor and management remains high.

—*Combat*, June 14, 1945

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In the States One-third of the Workers Belong to Two Large Unions: The AFL with 5,800,000 Members, the CIO with 5,200,000

NEW YORK: I've already written in *Combat* that tensions remain high between American workers and management. I should add that in the States what we call in Europe "the class struggle" is not viewed in the same light. Here workers view themselves as being involved in a struggle that has at its core the bad faith of some individuals rather than the very structure of society.

For them, the bosses are not the representatives of a social class whose interests are radically opposed to those of the proletariat. In order to adopt such a view, they would have had to perform a thorough analysis of capitalism and, as we have seen, nothing is farther from their mind. Rather, they see certain bosses as disloyal competitors or better yet as perfidious partners: in an economic system the workers accept these bosses don't play the game; they prevent the workers from organizing, they don't raise wages when they should, they are not sufficiently worried about the return of unemployment, and, perhaps, they even secretly wish its return. That's what they criticize them for. They impute to them an egoistic hard-heartedness that undoubtedly stems from their situation, but does not express the overall politics of a class.

The working masses feel deeply that they are in basic agreement with management: their common interest is to maintain the high living standard of the American people by raising production as much as possible. Thus, America's optimism and the preference for compromise solutions have had as a result that the worker's ideal remains the establishment of permanent harmony between employers and employees, between capital and labor. A short overview of the American union movement will clarify this.

The Older of the Two Unions: The AFL

Only one-third of the workers are unionized. This proportionally low number is explained first of all by their professional individualism of which we have already spoken, but another explanation lies in the fact that included among the "workers" are all the day and farm workers that the unions have not as yet tried to organize.

If one leaves aside the mineworkers' union, which accounts for at least a million men; the much less important "Brotherhood" [in English in the text] of railroad workers; and a handful of small independent unions, it may be said that in the United States there are two big professional organizations.

The oldest union, and today also the most important, is the American Federation of Labor (AFL). As its name indicates, it is a federation of unions in which each union preserves its autonomy. It was created in 1881, but did not acquire its present name until 1886. Since that time, it has not stopped perfecting its tactics. It has demanded and obtained an improvement in labor legislation and sanitary conditions, wage increases, and a reduction in the work week. Its principal weapon is the strike, which is used judiciously and commonly called its "economic power."

The Workers' Attachment to Economic Liberalism

It views itself as a distributor of manpower; it distributes it as best as it can and in the workers' interests; if these cannot be guaranteed, it summarily rejects the jobs offered. But it has taken a clear position against socialism and Samuel Gompers, its leader for forty years, prevented it from linking itself up permanently with a political party. Even today, after the 1930 depression, it remains hostile to state intervention and defends free enterprise. This does not mean that it never agrees to support a specific government action if it is shown to be necessary, but it wants to reduce its interference to the absolute minimum, because in principle it is suspicious of "planning" and it identifies democracy with economic liberalism.

On the question of race, it intends to remain neutral, and in practice this pretty well means that blacks remain excluded from the Federation. At present it has 5.8 million members and dominates the trades that have been unionized the longest, especially in the field of construction.

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A Split in the AFL

Between 1930 and 1936 it was torn apart by a violent conflict: a certain number of its members accused it of having been incapable of unionizing the big mass production industries: steel, autos, textile. Indeed, in these industries where the manufactured product is always the result of the co-operation of many skilled workers, the old-fashioned organization according to separate skills proved to be inefficient: fitters, bench hands, turners, finishers, even though they belong to different trades, have the same interests. Consequently, the minority that opposed the AFL proposed as a substitute for the federation system by skill a vertical structure that would unite in one single union all the workers of one particular industry. Therefore, the basic unit would no longer be the skill, but the total industry of which the skills are a part. The conflict resulted in a split.

The CIO, originally begun by a dissenting minority that left [the AFL], tried to organize the great industries according to these principles. It succeeded remarkably at it. Today it has 5.2 million members and its importance has become considerable, because the factories where it operated have been transformed for the most part into war plants.

The American Communists

Hence in principle, this new organization which grew out of the AFL only differs from the Federation from which it split by its structure and tactics. However, in fact it is made up of younger elements and it recruits its members in newer and more vibrant industries. Therefore, it must be considered as less conservative, which does not mean at all that it is influenced by socialist doctrine.

There are undoubtedly communists among its membership, but a minority is fiercely anti-communist and regularly demands their expulsion. Also, most American communists are workers sympathetic to the Soviet Union's cause who see America's future lying in close cooperation with the Soviets, but who absolutely do not want to see that type of government introduced into the United States.

Like the AFL, the CIO is particularly in favor of extracting the most from free enterprise, but it is more aware of the limits of economic liberalism and agrees that it should be corrected where there are lacunae or weaknesses by using moderate interventionism. It has supported Roosevelt's efforts at planning, specifically, the TVA, and accepts blacks as its members.

—*Combat*, June 30, 1945

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1. The story of the trip is told by Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: A Life* (Pantheon, 1985).

2. Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance* (Putnam, 1964), p. 17.

3. Deidre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir* (Summit Books, 1990), p 293.

4. For a detailed discussion see Michael Scriven, *Sartre and the Media* (St. Martin's, 1993).

5. Herbert Lottmann, *Albert Camus: A Biography* (Gingko Press, 1997), p. 366.

6. Communist philosopher Henri Lefebvre responded critically (in "Existentialism et Marxism," *Action*, June 8, 1945, p. 8) to Sartre's "More Precise Clarification" just after the above articles began running in *Combat*.

7. "*paysans*"

8. Taken from André Siegfried, *America Comes of Age: A French Analysis* (Harcourt, Brace, 1927).

9. On February 26, 1946, *Combat* published a front-page article entitled "With His Salary an American Can Buy Five Times More Manufactured Products than a French Salaried Worker and Two to Five Times More Foodstuffs."

10. Hendrik de Man (1885-1953) wrote studies of the Dutch and Belgian working classes as well as *Au-delà du Marxisme* (1929) and *The Psychology of Socialism* (1927).

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A Multiracial Right?

Can the GOP Build a Coalition?

Angela D. Dillard

WHAT ARE THE prospects for a multiracial coalition emerging on the right? George W. Bush's campaign efforts to court voters of color, as well as the spectacle of inclusion and diversity at last summer's Republican National Convention, have made this issue all the more pressing. Widely denounced as an illusion, the "rainbow" convention did raise two important and interrelated questions: what can the right offer to minorities, and what can minorities do for the right? The scores of African-Americans, Latinos, and Asian-Americans who addressed the mostly white delegates proffered answers to both of these questions by telling personal stories filled with references to the so-called "conservative values" of family, hard work, and bootstrap self-reliance. In their defense of limited government and the free market, the personal was definitely the political. During the optically stunning first night, which was devoted to education, delegates were treated to a variety of performances, including that of Representative J. C. Watts in a live broadcast from a black church in Philadelphia; an on-stage re-creation of a classroom at a mostly black and Hispanic charter school, where students shouted out their lessons to a syncopated beat; and the hip-hop gyrations of rap/soul singer Brian McKnight.

The star of the evening was Colin Powell. Four years earlier, in San Diego, Powell's defense of affirmative action met with boos from surly delegates. This time, the delegates cheered his criticism of Republicans who "miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand black kids get an education." Although neither Powell's warm reception nor the party's embrace of diversity—among speakers if not delegates—seem to signal real change of policy or philosophy, these events do give us a glimpse of what a "diverse" right might look like. Such a coalition, which would include moderate whites and Jews, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and upwardly mobile African-Americans, could very well transform American political culture. "Multicultural conservatives" are already positioned within think tanks, media outlets, political action committees, and an array of rightist organizations, both religious and secular. They promote a language of anti-statist individualism—as opposed to the usual group identity associated with multiculturalism—and accommodation and assimilation—as opposed to collective struggle.

Can such a coalition produce a long-range, dynamic trend? Well, yes and no. It is surely possible in theory. More high-profile figures such as Powell could be wooed and kept, more direct appeals to voters of color could be staged, and a further diversification of the conservative network could be achieved. But, given Republican history since 1964, as well as the difficulties of sustaining such coalition politics, it is highly unlikely in practice. The GOP, and the broader conservative movement that supports it, remains a house divided. Still, even if a multiracial conservatism fails to congeal into a political movement, the presence of minority conservatives has already altered the complexion of the contemporary right.

Courting Minorities

Segments of the right have courted minorities since the mid-1970s. Their efforts have been inconsistent and sporadic, which is hardly surprising given the relative success of the "southern strategy." The essential problem is obvious: one is usually inclined to bite a hand that slaps you. Still, the Republican Party, abetted by conservative strategists, established the Republi-

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can National Hispanic Assembly in 1974 and four years later aided in the creation of the Lincoln Institute for Research and Education, the nation's most prominent black conservative think tank. The year 1978 also saw the formation of the Log Cabin Republicans, a national organization of conservative homosexuals within, albeit less than fully embraced by, the GOP. But the August 2000 convention was not *that* inclusive. Few openly homosexual persons were allowed on the speaker's platform. They were not permitted to address sexual orientation and gay rights. The lesbianism of Dick Cheney's daughter was kept under wraps.

Historically, the Reagan-Bush years were crucial for cultivating minority conservatives, and many, including Clarence Pendleton, Clarence Thomas, Kay Cole James, and Linda Chavez, achieved positions of influence. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Republican National Committee (RNC) launched a series of initiatives to reach out to potential candidates and voters of color. When Lee Atwater assumed the helm of the RNC in 1989, he promised that "making black voters welcome in the Republican Party is my preeminent goal." Having enjoyed little tangible success (and little funding), Atwater's outreach division was later subsumed under the Office of Political Coalitions, which also sought to establish alliances with Hispanics, Asians, Eastern Europeans, and labor. In 1998 the RNC launched with much fanfare a new effort in this vein, the New Majority Council. Time will tell whether it will outperform its predecessors. These gestures toward bringing blacks, Latinos, and others into the GOP fold, and into the right more broadly conceived, have been impeded by a number of obstacles—most of them generated from within. But it is a complex story.

POLL AFTER POLL reveals that some 30 percent of African-Americans, particularly younger ones, identify as conservatives. More than 75 percent support Republican initiatives for school vouchers. As David A. Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies points out, surveys show "that on the issues of school vouchers, social security, crime, housing policy and welfare, among others, black public opinion [is] neither as liberal and uniform as observers in the press, politics, and academia had thought."

Social conservatism among segments of the African-American community has expressed itself in support for school prayer and against sex education, abortion, reproductive rights, and homosexual rights—a reality that some on the religious right have been eager to exploit. A similar affinity for both social and political conservatism exists among some Latinos and Asian-Americans. In California, under Richard Nixon and later under Ronald Reagan, Republicans won upward of 30 percent of the Latino vote and half of the Asian-American vote. More recently, in 1990, Pete Wilson's first gubernatorial campaign garnered nearly 45 percent of the Latino vote and a majority of the Asian-American vote. But instead of making good on promises of inclusion, the Republicans beat the drum against illegal (and often legal) immigrants. By playing to nativism during debates over immigration and bilingual education, Republicans angered and alienated potentially sympathetic Latinos, particularly Cuban-Americans, and Asian-Americans.

Such behavior reinforced the Republicans' endemic "image problem" among racial and ethnic minorities. As Powell remarked in his convention speech, "cynicism in the black community" is an appropriate response to the party's hypocrisy in rejecting racial set-asides while supporting "federal tax codes with preferences for special interests." Powell is not alone in questioning the GOP's commitment to raising a truly big tent. Faye Anderson, a dedicated black conservative, recently announced that she was leaving the party after nearly fifteen years. Because she was a key player in the formation of the New Majority Council, her exit and her charges of GOP hypocrisy are particularly instructive. In 1998, Anderson was one of six black women to rebuke the Republican Women Leaders Forum for its failure to issue a specific invitation to African-Americans. "On the eve of the 21st century, black Republican women are still fighting for inclusion in mainstream activities in the party of Lincoln," they wrote in a letter subsequently printed as a full-page ad in the conservative *Washington Times*. Echoing words at-

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tributed to nineteenth-century abolitionist Sojourner Truth, they continued: "On behalf of the millions of black women who are voters, tax payers, wives, soccer moms, caregivers, entrepreneurs, community and civic leaders, we ask the organizers of the Republican Women Leaders Forum and GOP leaders: Are we not women?"

The response of Anderson and company to this perceived slight was not only about the Forum. It was also about "racial stereotyping" among conservatives and Republicans—a practice, the women asserted, "at odds with the party's commitment to colorblindness and individual merit." Consider the paradox. Six black women, acting together and claiming to speak on behalf of black women, were arguing that conservative "colorblindness" could also imply bigotry. The defense—that the Forum was open to all Republican women, regardless of race, and that there was no conscious intent to exclude Anderson and the others—was unpersuasive to these black women.

The feeling that there is "no room at the inn," as Clarence Thomas once put it, will no doubt continue to be an issue for Latino, Asian-American, and also homosexual conservatives. For it to succeed in "outreach," the right would have to negotiate a brand of identity politics suitable instead of claiming to be blind to differences in race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. "Universalist" discourse about individualism, the free market, and upward mobility cannot completely erase the particular problems of identity.

Dirty Work?

All this is good news for the Democratic Party and the left, which has had its own struggle to sustain a rainbow coalition. Progressives should not, however, be overly confident that the right will always sabotage itself. The question of what the right can or cannot do for minorities remains distinct from what select minorities offer conservatives. Even if the Republican Party does not manage to increase significantly its percentage of the minority vote, conservatives of color will play a prominent role in the political arena. Critics delight in pointing out that conservative African-Americans, Latinos, and Asian-Americans have no real connection to or base of support within their own communities. But such a base is not entirely necessary to have an important impact. Consider the case of Susan Au Allen, an Asian-American woman who is in many ways typical of the emergent ideological style among conservatives of color.

Au Allen emigrated from Hong Kong in the early 1970s and became an international law attorney as well as president of the U.S. Pan-Asian Chamber of Commerce. Well-connected in Washington, she gained public attention with her 1993 article in *USA Today* urging the application of "Asian values" to the nation's crime problem, that is, submitting criminals to tarring, feathering, and a heavy dose of public shame. Since then, she has become a much sought "alternative" voice to offset the supposed orthodoxy imposed by Asian-American liberals and leftists. Au Allen's usefulness was displayed during the Senate confirmation hearing of Bill Lann Lee, whom Bill Clinton nominated in 1997—and renominated in 1998, and again in 1999—to be the first Asian Pacific-American to serve as assistant attorney general for civil rights.

Lee, who served as head of the Los Angeles-based western regional division of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and Education Fund (NAACP-LDF), was endorsed not only by the NAACP, but by the Organization of Chinese Americans, the Asian Pacific American Labor Coalition, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National Organization for Women. Although he managed to secure a certain amount of bi-partisan support, opposition came from Senators Orrin Hatch and Jesse Helms. Conservative pundit George Will saw in Lee's nomination the "aggressive cynicism characteristic of today's liberal idealists." Clint Bolick, the anti-affirmative action executive director of the Institute for Justice, was also a vocal foe. As the struggle wore on inside (and beyond) the Senate Judiciary Committee, Au Allen denounced Lee stridently. Indeed, her role was pivotal, since she was one of only two witnesses to testify against Lee. In essence, she was sent in to do the dirty work of (white) conservative men, apparently "proof" positive that the right's aversion to Lee, the son of Chinese

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immigrants, had nothing to do with race.

In between testy comments on Lee's work with the NAACP-LDF, Au Allen questioned whether Lee would enforce the Supreme Court's "vision of the 14th Amendment" as opposed to the "vision" endorsed by civil rights organizations. "I am very concerned that as the nation's top civil-rights law-enforcement official," she explained, "Lee will advocate certain policies on race and gender issues that are contrary to the provision of equal rights and opportunity for all, and that he will have a deleterious effect on racial and gender harmony in general, and on the rights of many individuals in particular." The "certain policies" were, of course, affirmative action and race and gender set-asides. At its core, Lee's confirmation battle became (like Lani Guinier's in 1993) part of the ongoing debate about what civil rights are and should be.

Lee is an advocate of an active model of civil rights law enforcement—deploying the institutional power of the judicial, congressional, and executive branches to eradicate the effects of past discrimination and present inequality. Au Allen, like most conservatives, is a devotee of a much more passive approach. For her, the goals of the civil rights movement were basically achieved by *Brown v. Board of Education* and the passage of the various civil rights and voting rights acts of the mid-1960s. Having destroyed legal barriers to equal opportunity, the work of the federal government is done. By claiming the "heroic" phase of the civil rights struggle as their own, conservatives can now aver that subsequent activism actually betrayed the civil rights values by embracing race-conscious policies. The doors to the American Dream are now open; failures to achieve are not due to barriers but to personal and cultural deficiencies. "We have come a long way from the time of Jim Crow," Au Allen proclaims. "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 has changed America. . . .The truth is America knows that a person is what a person makes out of himself or herself, not what color a person's skin is."

This public clash between an Asian-American woman aligned with conservatives and an Asian-American man aligned with liberals was a draw. For three years, Clinton put forth Lee's name and for three years the Senate Judiciary Committee refused to confirm him. Lee continued to hold the position on a temporary (and constitutionally questionable) "acting" basis until Clinton secured it by the backdoor method of congressional recess appointments—ironically, in August 2000 during the Republican Convention.

Au Allen's role was one part of an effort to redefine a "national consensus" on race, ethnicity, and gender by privileging individualism, assimilation, and accommodation—regardless of whether Republicans make good on promises of diversity and increase their support among minorities. Au Allen, Linda Chavez, and Representatives Henry Bonilla and J. C. Watts have joined forces with like-minded conservatives, including homosexuals, to put an inclusive veneer on their own movement's mainstream. And what they themselves bring to the debate largely rests on their useful identities. As Barbara Leeden, executive director of the Independent Women's Forum, remarks, "You can't have white guys saying you don't need affirmative action."

Model Minorities?

Conservatives are rarely as colorblind as they purport to be. Just as colorblindness presents problems for the right—not only in terms of criticism by figures such as Powell and Anderson, but in the recognition that organizations such as the New Majority Council are necessary—so it also presents nettlesome issues to conservatives of color themselves. Have they merely exchanged one form of identity politics for another? Is there, beneath the bromides about individualism, assimilation, and upward mobility, a Faustian bargain between conservatives of color and their white counterparts concerning "model minorities?" Isn't there a curious amalgam here of unarticulated class assumptions and often expressed claims about race? In fact, a highly politicized and dangerous representation of "blackness" is involved, and it provides a negative standard. To be a "model minority" in a diverse conservative coalition ends up meaning: don't be like "the blacks," who persist in seeking collective redress from the federal government and continue to exhibit signs of cultural "pathology."

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Chavez invokes just this sort of notion in her book *Out of the Barrio*. She sees a direct and negative relationship between the post-1965 phase of the civil rights movement and the ideologies of the Latino left. "So long as Hispanics remained a separate and disadvantaged group," she writes, "they were entitled [like blacks] to affirmative action programs, compensatory education, government set-asides and myriad other programs." The dream of assimilation gave way to ethnic power-brokering. Asian-American conservatives have, in turn, used Chavez's arguments as a warning to their own communities. "Asians who wonder about the cult of victimization adopted by [liberal] Asian activists would do well to see how this attitude disadvantages the Hispanic community," insists conservative *Asian Week* columnist Arthur Hu. "They get political points by showing what a lowly race they are instead of being proud of progress that is being made."

Usually all this is accompanied with assertions about the elitism, self-interest, and malfeasance of liberals and leftists. According to conservatives, the "civil rights establishment" focuses on historical oppression and present-day discrimination merely out of self-interest, to fill the coffers of its organizations. And "while others are assimilating," says black conservative Ward Connerly, "blacks are getting further and further away from one nation indivisible." In his campaign against affirmative action, Connerly contended that racism is no longer a chief factor in limiting black advancement and that remedial federal programs harm both American society at large and those whom they were specifically designed to assist. Get rid of them and what remains of the "American dilemma" can be solved with relatively little pain. And that may well be true—for the vast majority of whites and a significant segment of middle- and upper-middle-class minorities.

This is essentially what conservatives and Republicans have said since the 1960s. A cadre of Latino and Asian-American conservatives has worked to disguise the degree to which this thinking rests on class biases and racial (often racist) assumptions. It may indeed help pave the way for a multiracial right. But the consequence will be tenser relationships between Latinos, Asians, and blacks, especially if assimilation is pursued, as Toni Morrison once put it, "on the backs of blacks." That some African-American conservatives appear willing to assimilate on the backs of the black poor is doubly disturbing. The major losers in the shifting discourse about race and identity in America, then, may prove to be the black (and Puerto Rican) poor who, pathologized and silenced, will continue to be everybody's favorite scapegoat. The history of the modern conservative movement is intertwined with the dynamics of race, class, and exclusion—despite sporadic gestures to the contrary. The future, in substance if not always in style, may simply offer more of the same, albeit with a visually multiracial twist. From this perspective, the most pressing question is not *can* a multiracial right be crafted and sustained, but who will pay for it? ●

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What's Wrong With Private Funding for Public Schools?

Andrew Stark

In 1998, Diane Mancus was principal of Houston's Ser Niños Elementary School, located in a poor neighborhood a few miles from Rice School, a K-8 institution smack in the center of one of the city's wealthiest enclaves. Mancus remembers the day in March when both schools staged fundraisers. Rice held an auction, at which one parent bid $20,000 for a reserved parking space in front of the school so that he could drop his child off at the last minute. Others bid large sums to enable their sons and daughters to spend a day with the principal or to go on a weekend camping trip with the school's teachers. Ser Niños, by contrast, opted for a garage sale that raised forty-four dollars. Unfortunately, Mancus recalls, the event ended on a sour note when "several parents who worked the sale complained that others were taking some of the items home with them."

The contrast between Rice and Ser Niños is evocative for many reasons—not the least being the way in which Ser Niños's garage sale turned into a form of personal charity for the poverty-stricken parents, not just for the school itself, while Rice auctioned off parts of the school itself—teachers' time, principal's time—and not just, as is often the case, football tickets or computers donated by wealthy parents. But at the heart of Mancus's recollection is a story that is repeating itself in countless American communities: the growing willingness and capacity of parents to contribute private funds to their children's public school, thus introducing a new magnitude of inequality into the public system. As the title of a recent *Time* magazine article on the subject suggested—and as the amounts raised at the Rice auction confirm—we have moved "Beyond Bake Sales." Or, as Lydia Moss, principal of the District of Columbia's Clark Elementary, puts it, when wealthy parents contribute private funds to top up the public school budget, they are "getting a private school education for their kids on the public nickel."

That description, "a private school education on the public nickel," almost makes it sound as if we are talking about vouchers. But in fact the idea behind vouchers is the opposite. With vouchers—which, despite all the national controversy they've sparked, are actually on the agenda in only a handful of jurisdictions—parents use public funds to purchase services from the private schools their children attend. What Mancus describes is the reverse: parents using private resources to purchase services for the public schools their children attend. Although it has received much less national attention than vouchers, it provokes fierce equity debates at the local level across the country.

In a larger sense, though, the growing tendency for parents to fund public schools privately and the movement to get government to fund private schools publicly are of a piece. It is no accident that act60.org—a Vermont Web site devoted to advancing the cause of private funding for public schools—also contains several links to sites that promote public funding for private schools. Both are part and parcel of a two-decades old political movement toward privatizing what have typically been public functions: from private communities demanding that the public treasury grant them tax concessions for the dues they pay to maintain their own streets and parks, to merchants in Los Angeles and Philadelphia raising millions of dollars to build police stations in their neighborhood, to the privatization of public hospitals everywhere from Boston to Cincinnati, from Tampa to Tulsa. What's happening in education is another variation on this larger theme.

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Defenders of parental fundraising have several ways of deflecting concern from the inequities that private money can introduce into the public school system. They note, for example, that there exist far more substantial inequalities in public funding for public schools. This is true, but it is also beside the point. Public inequities exist between school districts, with wealthy districts in many states continuing to fund their schools at levels impossible for poorer districts. "Within districts"—as Kathy Christie of the Education Commission for the States notes—"boards and superintendents do not favor one school over another when allotting public funds." And it is precisely this longstanding intradistrict level playing field that parents, who naturally favor their own child's school over others, disturb when they inject their own money into the system. It is exactly because "public money is being spent equally within districts," says Wayne Sampson of the Illinois Association of School Boards, that "parental inequality in private funding becomes a real problem."

Even so, defenders of parental fundraising point out, the wealthiest parents can raise only a fraction—though sometimes as much as 10 percent—of the amounts their schools get in public funds. The inequities, they claim, aren't all that significant. But this is reductionist: people's beliefs about whether they are being treated justly don't display a one-to-one correspondence with economic measures of inequality. Tocqueville noted long ago that as the most egregious social inequities diminish, the smaller ones grow vexatious and disruptive beyond their size; massive political discontent can fix on relatively small discrepancies. If one school "can hire a half-time art teacher with parental money, that becomes a real problem for that local community," says Sampson. It "raises all kinds of moral and ethical issues."

And, of course, it's not always just another half-time art teacher. Parental money now pays for auditoriums, science labs, extra grade-one teachers to lower class sizes, and much more. True, there has always been some parental fundraising for public schools, and no one proposes to get rid of it outright. But the question now confronting school boards across the country is this: assuming the inevitability and desirability of at least some parental funding of public schools, where—on the spectrum from playground equipment to computers to teachers' aides to half-time art or language teachers to full-time grade-level teachers—should we draw the line as to what private money should be allowed to fund? Does anything go as long as parents can pay for it? When does the inequality become egregious? As it turns out, communities across the country have, willy-nilly, come up with a near universally shared if universally unspoken answer to this question. The problem is that it's not a very good answer.

Which Inequalities?

To see why, let's examine the anatomy of a particular parental fundraising controversy, perhaps the highest profile case thus far. In the late summer of 1997, parents at Greenwich Village's P.S. 41 organized to pay the salary of a grade-four teacher who would otherwise have been yanked from the school because student numbers did not justify her presence. The then-chancellor of New York City schools, Rudy Crew, squelched the parental bid, and he did so on equity grounds, arguing, according to the *New York Times*, that it was "unfair for affluent parents to be able to reduce class size in this way while poor parents could not."

Defenders of the parental bid were quick to point out that there was a problem with Crew's refusal. The chancellor had allowed New York parents to pay for playground equipment, computers, French teachers, art teachers, teachers' aides: everything short of grade-level teachers. Why was he drawing the line there? Indeed, several months after he clamped down on the P.S. 41 proposal, Crew warmly welcomed an alumni gift of ten million dollars to Brooklyn Technical High School, money intended to fund new computers, an aerospace-quality wind tunnel, and an electron microscope, each costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. Not surprisingly, as the *Times* reported, "word of the gift [to Brooklyn Technical] once again raised questions about . . . a potential double standard."

Does allowing parents to spend money on some items for the public schools imply allowing them to spend on all? That's what the P.S. 41 parents seem to have been saying, thereby

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forcing Crew to come up with a rationale for his decision. Although he had no quarrel with "efforts by individuals...to finance fringe items—like computers or enhanced teacher training," Crew told the *Times*, it was vital that private money not skew "basic educational services" such as grade-level teachers. As Steve Conn of Manhattan's Center for Education Innovation pointedly asks, however, "what is the difference, in this day and age, between computers and teachers?" And even if you believe that grade-level teachers are more vital than computers, there will necessarily come a patch on the spectrum somewhere in between—say the patch separating teachers' aides from French teachers—where the issues cease to be so clear-cut. "Funding an extra aide is maybe more inequitable than an extra French teacher," hazards Jim Terrell of Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland; "but maybe not. . . where do you draw the line?"

So Crew's attempt to carve out and protect some school services as more basic than others on pedagogical grounds founders. And yet, perhaps without saying so publicly, Crew was drawing another kind of line, not a pedagogical but a political one. Pat Lawrence, a former P.S. 41 Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president, notes that a privately paid grade-level teacher—unlike a computer or a French teacher—would have created not just interschool but intraschool inequity. In contrast to a computer or a language teacher or even an electron microscope, all of which serve the entire student body or at least a large proportion of it, P.S. 41's proposed grade-four teacher would have served only students in the fourth grade. Instead of wanting to "help the school as a whole," Lawrence says, the fourth-grade parents were "earmarking their money to benefit their own children." For many years, Lawrence points out, P.S. 41 had a "dance teacher, paid for by the parents, and there was no squawk. But with a fourth-grade teacher, parents of first-graders were saying, 'why is that important?'" Indeed, according to another former PTA president, Rebecca Daniels, P.S. 41 itself had an established rule on the books that said, "No raising money for your own class." There is thus, she says, a "policy of intraschool equity at P.S. 41, " and "the hiring of the grade-four teacher"—which Daniels supported—was concededly "not consistent with it." The problem is that "it happened so fast and got so out of hand . . . parents were raising money in a matter of hours and that money . . . had to be embraced"; accordingly, it was ratified by the school PTA.

So Crew did have available a rationale for saying no to P.S. 41's teacher (while saying yes to Brooklyn Tech's computers), but one that really had to do with intraschool, not interschool equity. Indeed, though Crew never said so, Pat Lawrence believes it was intraschool inequity that "really bothered the chancellor." She notes that shortly after the controversy, Crew began enforcing an old rule that forbids parents to give anything worth more than fifty dollars to their own child's classroom—although parents can give a thousand times that to their own child's school. Anne Bryant, executive director of the National Schools Boards Association, offers a similar assessment: "Crew "felt it's better for parents, if they're going to raise private money, to fund stuff that will enhance all the school's students."

Further confirmation comes from Richard Goldstein, assistant principal at P.S. 321 in Brooklyn. Around the time that Crew denied P.S. 41's fourth-grade parents their wish to raise $46,000 for an extra fourth-grade teacher, parents at P.S. 321 raised one hundred thousand dollars—without running afoul of the chancellor—to pay the salaries of an art and a music teacher. If Crew had really been worried about interschool inequity, his denial of P.S. 41 and his nod of approval to P.S. 321 would have been inconsistent. But if his guiding principle was in fact "no intraschool inequality," then his two decisions are "easily reconciled," Goldstein says: "A fourth-grade teacher is more troubling than an art teacher, because its benefits to the school are less general."

BUT IF anything is testimony to the chancellor's focus on intraschool equity, it is the way in which he finally resolved the P.S. 41 affair. After prohibiting the grade-four parents from paying for their children's teacher, Crew turned around and directed the district superintendent to find public funding

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for the position. According to Lawrence, the money "came from a professional development fund that would have benefited all the teachers in the district." Ironically, the denouement in the P.S. 41 case was that the chancellor, though he avoided intraschool inequity in private funding, introduced a new measure of interschool inequity in public funding. In order to uphold the principle that all classes within a school must benefit from private parental support, Crew mollified the angry parents by raiding a public fund that would otherwise have benefited all schools within the district.

It is far from a singular case. Paul Vance, former superintendent of schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, recalls a group of parents in an East Silver Spring school seeking to privately pay for a special computer-lab teacher. The board said no; the parents were upset, and "what ended the debate," Vance says, "was that the superintendent hired the teacher himself on the public payroll." All of which goes to show how very sacred is the rule that requires private funding to be distributed equitably within the school. Officials are willing to distribute public funds inequitably across schools in order to uphold it.

In a sense, it is not surprising that intraschool inequity should emerge as such a powerful sub rosa criterion in debates over parental funding. It has a least-common-denominator quality: when politicians know that a particular expenditure raises equity concerns not only for other school communities, but even for members of a particular school, they have enough cover to say no. The problem, however, is that intraschool equity is a very poor proxy for interschool equity; the two frequently diverge. Indeed, the universal fastidiousness with which the taboo against intraschool inequity is observed, in a nation where far more substantial amounts of interschool inequity are routinely tolerated, is remarkable.

Consider some examples. When it comes to funding field trips—at costs of a couple of hundred dollars each—Brooklyn's Goldstein, whose school otherwise raises money in the six figures that he would never put into a district-wide pot, insists that parents put their contributions into a school-wide fund. "They cannot go ahead," Goldstein says, "and raise money for a particular grade's outing." Likewise with Sam Skootsky, head of the booster club at Westwood School in Los Angeles, which raises $240,000 in parental money annually. "Fundraising," he says, "must benefit the whole school communally; you can't fundraise just for kindergarten . . . we have turned down contributions earmarked for particular classes." Yet Skootsky dismisses the idea of parents giving their money to a district-wide fund, one that would benefit all schools in the area, precisely because that would be "too communal."

Even in cases where individual classes are allowed to raise limited funds—as they still are, for example, under the old rule Chancellor Crew revived in New York—the intraschool equity norm cabins the practice within tight constraints. "For a long time," says Nancy Wainman, head of the well-heeled booster club at L.A.'s Warner Avenue Elementary, which contributes mightily to interschool inequity by raising two hundred thousand dollars annually, "individual classes at Warner raised money for various projects and then kept the surpluses; we put a stop to that. Now, the surpluses must go into the general school kitty, to be spent by the [school's] leadership council."

This principle of intraschool equity should not be confused with the very different principle courts have applied in cases concerning individual parental fee-paying. Courts tend to permit such fees precisely when only some students within the school will benefit—asking grade-six parents to pay individually for their child's field trip, say, is okay—but not when the fees are meant to benefit the whole school, in which case they are considered an illegitimate tax. But while intraschool equity might not govern when parental monies flow into the school through fee-paying, it rules when they come in through fundraising. The problem is that although intraschool equity provided Chancellor Crew a rationale with which to prohibit privately paid grade-level teachers, it doesn't, as Nancy Wainman and Sam Skootsky attest, seem to preclude much else in the way of interschool inequity.

And, in fact, the intraschool-equity norm doesn't even protect this last redoubt of grade-

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level teachers. Consider the case of Portland, Oregon. Unlike in New York—where parents may privately pay the salaries of French teachers but are forbidden from paying for grade-level teachers—in Portland, parents are allowed to pay the salaries of grade-level teachers, while a parent group at one local school was recently denied permission to underwrite the salary of a German teacher. It turns out, however, that the principle of intraschool equity was at play in Portland too; it just spit out a different conclusion. One of the conditions that attaches to the hiring of an extra grade-level teacher in Portland is that the whole school, or at least a large proportion of it, benefit. Grade-level teachers can be made fungible, and in Portland an extra one is generally used to lower student-teacher ratios not just in the grade itself but throughout the school. Or, as Portland middle-school director Peter Hamilton puts it, "when you privately fund one more grade-one teacher, it can help [the] kid in grade four because of how the splits work out." The problem with the proposed German teacher at Portland's Lincoln High, by contrast, was that German was of interest only to the kids of the few parents pushing it. When the council said "no German teacher," the interested parents declined to make a comparable contribution to the school as a whole—just as most of the P.S. 41 parents did in New York, when their plans for the grade-four teacher were turned down.

What's Wrong?

From superintendents to school boards, and from principals to parents, intraschool equity is the abiding norm across America, the mother rule to which parental fundraising for schools must recur. But it is useless as a standard for drawing distinctions between more or less egregious kinds of interschool equity. So it seems we come down to a stark question: given that there is no way of drawing a coherent line between acceptable and unacceptable interschool equity, should we allow parents to raise funds for their own child's school? And if not, is there an alternative? The answers are no, we should not (perhaps beyond a certain de minimis level) allow parents to raise funds for their own child's school. And yes, there is an alternative: they can raise parental money for a fund that would distribute it, on fair criteria, to all schools in the district.

Consider the first question first: Why should we prohibit parents' contributing money to their own child's school? Actually, the argument of parent fundraisers provides the best answer. They insist that money be given communally at the school level, not parochially to the classroom. But on what consistent principle can they then require it to stay parochially at the school level, instead of going communally to the district—to be allocated on some equitable basis to all community schools? I asked several parent fundraisers this question; their answers—which reveal the always fascinating arguments that individuals muster as they navigate the everyday politics of their lives–were best articulated by Nancy Wainman of Warner Elementary's booster club. Ultimately, though, Wainman's attempt to square intraschool equity with interschool inequity fails.

Wainman begins by defending parental giving that confines itself to a child's school instead of flowing to the district as a whole. "Charity begins at home," she says, and "the local school is a part of you. It's like your extended family, and so you have the same obligation [to it as] you do to your family to help out." People, Wainman concludes, "just don't have the same feeling about the district." Wainman's argument here is reminiscent of the philosophical position taken by the Cambridge moral theorist Bernard Williams, who believes that we bear special obligations to meet the needs of those closest to us, even if those needs are not as significant as those of strangers. It's okay, in other words, to give your own child a bicycle, even when another child is starving in a village half way around the world. And this is exactly what Wainman does, when she says that parents bear an obligation to care for those near and dear in the local school, before attending to the needs of those more distant in the rest of the district.

There's just one problem, though. The very claims of proximity that Wainman uses to defend the school against the district as a whole are also available to parents who would prefer to give to their own child's classroom rather than to the school as a whole. According to

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Neal Rosenberg, an attorney who represented the P.S. 41 grade-four parents, many of them—precisely because they, too, believe that charity begins at home—thought that "their primary obligation was to see that their own child's class was well-provided for first, and then they'd concern themselves with the school." In other words, the argument that Wainman uses to oppose interschool equity undercuts her defense of intraschool equity.

But Wainman has a comeback to parental opponents of intraschool equity. It's that there's something selfish about their position. When you "give to your own child's classroom," Wainman says, "it's like giving a gift to a member of your own family; it's not truly communal giving since your own child disproportionately benefits. . . . [P]arents who simply want to funnel money back to their own child's classroom don't always show enough community spirit." When, on the other hand, "you give to the school, you are engaging in a more public-spirited act;" for in this case, the recipients are sufficiently distant from your own immediate circle of private interests—or, at least, your own child's interest remains sufficiently diluted within the relatively vaster student body—that there is a truly selfless, hence commendable aspect to what you're doing. Here, Wainman's argument is redolent of the claims made by the Princeton philosopher Peter Singer, who criticizes people for donating to medical research in the hope that they will thereby benefit an ill relative. "That's not charity," Singer says; "it's self interest." By contrast, giving to starving villagers halfway round the world—which is what Singer counsels us to do–is clearly altruistic, since there's no way that you benefit.

But this very same Singeresque argument that Wainman uses to defend the claims of the school as a whole against the classroom is also available to those who would defend the claims of the district against the school. Beth Dilley, who raises private money for a district-wide fund in Grand Rapids, puts it this way: "Come on, let's not kid ourselves; giving to the district as a whole is a generous and community-minded act in a way in which giving to your own child's school simply is not, no matter how you dress it up." In other words, the very argument Wainman uses to defend intraschool equity undercuts her opposition to interschool equity.

None of this is to find fault with Nancy Wainman or other fundraisers, nor is it to diminish the good she and others are doing for their schools. She is doing it, however, in a context that requires her to fight a war about obligation on two fronts, defending the claims of the school against those of the larger district on the one hand and those of the smaller classroom on the other. If Williams says that charity begins at home, and Singer maintains that when we get too close to home it ceases to be charity, Wainman has to take both positions, thereby handing each opponent the weapon she wields against the other.

In fact not only are parent fundraisers like Wainman fighting on two fronts, they are also—unlike Williams and Singer, whose competing claimants are a family member in the next room and a starving villager ten thousand miles away—doing so at very close range. The alternative recipients for Wainman's funds reside in another district school only six blocks away, or in a particular school classroom maybe a mere six yards away. To see why this creates uniquely serious moral problems for parental fundraisers, imagine a war about obligation being fought on two fronts, but one where the alternative recipients operated at far greater range. Because of the longer distances involved, for example, it seems plausible to say that giving to the United Way is indeed charitable by comparison with giving a bike to your son, but that it is still sufficiently close to home, by comparison with the stranger several continents away, to fulfill a legitimate prior obligation. Certainly, that's more plausible than what parent fundraisers have to say: namely, that by comparison with your own child's classroom, your own child's school is somehow so significantly more removed from your circle of interests that giving to it would be demonstrably more altruistic. Not only that, but by comparison with schools as close as two or three miles away, the immediately local school is somehow so much closer to home that you have a greater obligation to it

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than you do to your own district as a whole.

What's Right?

There is thus a fatal inconsistency in the arguments that parent fundraisers make in defense of their activity. Once they've conceded that it's selfish to give to your own child's classroom instead of to the entire school, they've disarmed themselves against those who say it's selfish to give to your own child's school instead of to the entire district. Wainman reveals the strain in her argument by explicitly likening the local school to one's own "family"—so that you have a greater obligation to give to it than to the district—but then explicitly distinguishing the local school from one's "own family"—so that giving to it is distinctly less self-serving than giving to your own child's classroom. But it can't work both ways.

If confining parental giving to the school level is unjustified, even on the principles held by its practitioners, what's the alternative? The PTA—which has always had an uneasy relationship with booster clubs like Wainman's—takes the position that individual schools must face a choice: Either they should not raise money at all or they should raise it for a district-wide fund, knowing, as Illinois PTA president Brenda Diehl puts it, that the fund "could then very well decide to use what they donate at a different building."

Surely, of the two, it's better that parents raise money for the district than not at all. And indeed, about 30 percent of the country's school districts have such funds, which are generally established and governed by volunteers operating at arm's-length from the school board, distributing the money they raise according to criteria for which all district schools are eligible. Currently, however, they raise most of their money not from parents (with whom they often find themselves in frustrating competition), but from local corporations and foundations, which generally have no problem with interschool equity—although, perhaps because they have no personal stake in a particular child's class, they are less constrained to observe intraschool equity and so frequently take a classroom-specific focus, as Amoco does, for example, when it concentrates its support on grade-five math classes.

But some parent fundraisers—and this is their ultimate fallback position—point out that whatever the moral niceties, the raw reality is that parents simply won't raise money if it's not going to their kid's school. And there may be something to that. So when it comes to parental giving, perhaps the answer is to move from intraschool to interschool equity by degrees. Here, Portland, Oregon, where parents are allowed to pay even for extra grade-level teachers, has piloted an interesting initiative. "Parents can pay for teachers at their kids' school," says Cynthia Guyer of the Portland Public Schools Foundation—a district-wide fund devoted to raising private money for Portland's schools—"but they must give 33 percent back to the district fund, and we take that money and pool it for high-poverty schools through a competitive grant process." This one-third rule is a "marriage of tensions," Guyer acknowledges; "equity folks say it's too little; some parents say it's too much." But so far, it's working.

The greatest hope of reconciling psychological reality—parents often want to give only to their own child's school—with the moral context that undermines their justification for so doing, is to split the difference in this way. District-wide funds and PTAs should accept that parents prefer to give to their own child's school, and harness that preference by piggybacking on their fundraising, not hampering it. But in return, booster clubs and parent fundraisers should give more thought to the moral structure of their situation, and allow that if they are going to deny the claim of the classroom just down the hallway, in the name of the school's greater good, they cannot then deny the claim of the school just down the highway, made in the name of the district's even greater good. ●

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Suburbs, Status, and Sprawl

Benjamin Ross

THE NEIGHBORS of Our Lady of Mercy church were aghast. The archdiocese wanted to build an assisted-living home for thirty senior citizens on the church's eleven-acre property in an expensive Washington, D.C., suburb.

The aggrieved residents quickly collected money to hire a zoning lawyer, and two evenings of hearings were filled with bitter protests against maltreatment at the hands of the power structure. But the arguments ordinarily used to keep apartments out of single-family areas lacked credibility. Disabled seniors were unlikely to party noisily into the night. And traffic congestion was not a problem; nurses' aides and kitchen staff arrive for the morning shift before the lawyers and lobbyists of the neighborhood pull out of their driveways.

So the neighbors' attorney fell back on an esthetic argument—the proposed building had an "institutional character" that didn't fit into its surroundings. This reasoning, backed up by the volume of complaints, seemed to make headway. But toward the end of the second night of hearings, a simple question was asked: Aren't some single-family houses in this neighborhood bigger than what the church wants to build?

So ended one small skirmish in the development wars that have become a staple of local politics across the country. "Slow-growth" homeowners are well established as a major political force in upscale suburbs and gentrifying city neighborhoods. Vigilant to protect against the intrusion of lower-income and lower-prestige neighbors, townhouse residents fight apartments while single-family householders combat townhouses. As the years pass, almost anything that might be built near someone's house has become an object of wrath; the *New York Times* recently described how schools, ball fields, and even a nature path have come under attack in the New York suburbs. Although frequently disparaged as NIMBYs—for "Not In My Back Yard"—the homeowner groups present themselves as innocent victims of oppression by greedy developers. Improbable as the K Street lawyers who live around Our Lady of Mercy may be in the role of wretched of the earth, the pseudo-Marxist contraposition of developers to "the people" has become an unconscious assumption of discussion about land use. Transparently self-interested propaganda by developers and their friends serves only to reinforce the NIMBYs' image as suffering victims, and rare efforts at serious analysis, such as Mike Davis's lacerating account of Los Angeles homeowner associations in *City of Quartz*, make little impression.

Long after suburbs had been scorned in folk song as the setting of "boxes made of ticky-tacky," their land use remained a subject of serious study only by those directly involved. The no-growth movement drew scant attention from students of politics. Organized homeowners largely kept out of state and national politics, hobbled by the mixing of Democrats and Republicans among their membership and by a localism that Davis brilliantly compares to the worldview ascribed by Karl Marx to the French peasants of the 1840s. Conflict with labor was muted, perhaps because the segments of construction affected by growth controls are largely nonunion. Even occasional appearances on a wider stage, as when California homeowner associations supported the Proposition 13 tax-cutting referendum of 1978, attracted little notice.

Motivation

A question addressed by almost no one is the motivation of the NIMBYs. The few published

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discussions of the issue focus on property values; even Davis's penetrating analysis too often accepts the assertions of angry homeowners that their objective is to maintain the worth of their homes. But materialistic explanations do not do justice to the slow-growth movement. This movement aims at advancing status far more than defending wealth, and to understand it we must lay aside Karl Marx and pick up Thorstein Veblen.

The orientation toward status shows most clearly in the intensity with which single-family zoning is protected in prestige neighborhoods near suburban transit stations. In some cases, homeowners would reap an enormous financial windfall if their neighborhoods were rezoned to allow greater density. Yet it is in just these situations that resistance to development is most intense. In Washington, D.C.'s suburban Montgomery County, where I live, the wealthy single-family neighborhoods of Chevy Chase have waged a twenty-year battle to limit the growth of offices, upscale stores, and high-rise apartments around the Friendship Heights subway station. When the county authorized a twenty-story apartment tower inside one nearby village, municipal boundaries were quickly redrawn to stop the residents of half-million-dollar condos from voting in village elections. Over the years, a stream of activists has emerged from Chevy Chase to provide political and organizational leadership to the antigrowth movement countywide.

In the last two or three years, older suburbs in desirable locations like Chevy Chase have discovered a new problem. The homes in these communities are sometimes modest in size, having been built when the area was less expensive. New owners understandably believe that a purchase price running upward of a half-million dollars entitles them to a big house. The old structures are torn down and replaced with big new houses that fill up lots and overshadow neighbors. Local governments have been quick to respond to this crisis with "anti-mansionization" rules that protect the existing scale of neighborhoods. Clearly, money is not at stake here; a mansion next door is not bad for property values. What is threatened, rather, is the image of the community; big houses scream "nouveau riche" to neighbors who want to put themselves on a higher plane.

A different type of NIMBY can be found in the suburban enclaves of post-sixties radicalism that have grown up around some cities. Communities like Santa Monica and Berkeley in California, and Takoma Park in the Washington, D.C., suburbs, are among the most stringent in limiting growth. In these hothouses of environmental activism, opposition to the automobile rarely extends so far as to support building anything new close to public transit. As these words are written, owners of restored Victorian houses in Takoma Park are righteously waging battle to prevent construction of townhouses on an empty lot next to the local subway station.

Where Chevy Chase projects an aristocratic image—columnist George Will lives next door to one of the homeowner leaders—the style of Takoma Park is funk. But both types of NIMBYs share the same objective, that of protecting distinctions that allow them to feel superior to outsiders. For not a few Takoma Park leftists, their walkable enclave is less an example to be copied than a badge of nobility that distinguishes its residents from ordinary suburbanites. The critique of a society that creates ticky-tacky boxes has mutated into a feeling of superiority over the people who live in the boxes.

ALTHOUGH SUBURBAN homeowners have organized civic associations since at least the 1920s, the slow-growth ideology is a more recent phenomenon. Mike Davis's research dates its appearance in southern California to 1972. Impressions from other cities point to origins in the seventies as well. Why, after decades of suburban development, did an antigrowth movement arise then?

The antigrowth politics that emerged in the seventies may be rooted in economic changes that began a few years earlier. In *The Conquest of Cool*, Thomas Frank describes how in the sixties American capitalism shifted away from mass marketing toward the promotion of branded products with images tailored to attract distinct market segments. Advertisers aimed at differentiating a particular brand from what the conformist masses were buying. In short, the sixties were when consumers began

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to buy the designer label rather than the clothing itself.

With housing being such a large part of the economy and so closely tied to its consumers' self-image, this transition was inevitably reflected in the real estate market. Homeowners sought psychological differentiation in neighborhoods as in soft drinks, clothing, and automobiles. Big houses with yards were no longer unambiguous badges of success; the owner risked being classed with the now-reviled suburban conformists. New distinctions had to be fabricated, even as old-style exclusion of racial and religious minorities was being suppressed by force of law.

On an overt level, by limiting the number who can live in upscale subdivisions, the anti-growth movement satisfies the need of wealthy homeowners to distinguish themselves from their neighbors. When less affluent areas join in, they can at least share the feeling that someone or something is being kept out. Beyond that, the arguments used to fight new development allow suburbanites to distinguish themselves from fifties-style conformists. Stopping growth is almost never advocated for its own sake, but is justified in terms of some other concern—traffic congestion, preventing crime, saving trees, preserving historic buildings, or whatever else comes to mind. When, as in one recent local example, angry homeowners rally to preserve an outstanding specimen of the strip-mall architecture of the 1940s, it is easy to be cynical. But there is more to this than just a way to keep something from being built. The excuse, whatever it is, gives the neighborhood the equivalent of a brand identity.

Places like Chevy Chase and Takoma Park are blessed with especially powerful brands. The one "traditional" and the other "subversive," they are the real estate equivalents of Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein. Advertised images differ far more than the houses and the clothes. The diverse population surrounding the brightly painted wooden Victorians of Takoma Park contrasts sharply with the stone exteriors and manicured lawns of Chevy Chase, but on the inside you are likely to find the same remodeled kitchen with open countertops and brightly polished copper pans hanging from the ceiling.

The shine on the copper betrays the kitchen's function as an emblem of status. People who cook regularly in copper pots don't keep them polished; it's too much work. The glittering pans demonstrate that the "island kitchen" is a room designed for show, not for use, like our grandparents' parlor with plastic-covered furniture where no one was allowed to sit. Just as the ideal of beautiful skin changed from pale to tan when poor people came in from the fields to work in factories, changing social conditions have reordered the hierarchy of rooms in the house. When ordinary mothers who stayed home and prepared family meals felt inferior to rich women who had cooks, the parlor signified middle-class status and the kitchen was hidden in the back. In today's working-class families, both parents have jobs, and mealtime is a run to McDonald's. The wife who can stay home to cook for the children has become a symbol of affluence. The kitchen thus moves to the center of the contemporary house. More often than not, in these middle-class families, the wife who owns an island kitchen works long hours to pay the remodeling bill, and dinner is ethnic take-out picked up on the way home. The fancy kitchen sits as unused as grandmother's parlor.

Rooted as it is in status differentiation, NIMBY politics has developed a distinct style. Whether they place themselves on the left or right, slow-growth activists affect a similar tone of aggrieved indignation. As to the fashionable causes of the moment, they insist on purity and bitterly assail any compromise. Aiming to reinforce the brand image of the locality with matching political signifiers, they care little whether their engagement will accomplish anything beyond that. But questions of traffic and development that directly affect real estate bring forth the rankest opportunism. Vertigo-inducing shifts of alliance occur when one community cuts a deal at the expense of another.

These traits are most visible in the copper-pot neighborhoods, where strongly branded real estate generates an intense slow-growth politics. Ideology varies to match the local style: opponents of development in Chevy Chase led

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a successful campaign to pass county-wide tax limits, while the most strongly anti-development member of the Takoma Park City Council is a leftist who advocates massive increases in school spending. But these differences are labels pasted on similar goals of governance. Chevy Chase Republicans favor intrusive government regulation of land use, while many Takoma Park leftists support a high-priced country club's efforts to obstruct construction of mass transit through its golf course. And, ignoring labels altogether, the NIMBY politicians of Takoma Park and Chevy Chase are close allies at election time.

So What?

Until recent years, the political theater of the slow-growth movement could be observed from the audience, a distracting spectacle perhaps, but one that did little real harm. However, economic and political trends set in motion by the continuing spread of suburban sprawl no longer permit a detached view. After fifty years of metastatic growth, the effects of suburban development have become inescapable, and land use questions are moving into the center of public debate. Ever-worsening traffic congestion degrades the quality of life in many suburbs, and new roads, the solution long preferred by development interests and the powerful highway lobby, are becoming unaffordable. As traffic congestion pushes some to road rage, others choose to leave their cars at home. The monotony of suburban subdivisions creates a demand for urban public spaces. Interest is rapidly growing in a return to urban development patterns, with less driving and more reliance on walking and mass transit.

The issue has begun to emerge out of local politics onto a larger stage. National environmental groups like the Sierra Club sponsor anti-sprawl campaigns. Oregon's long-established rules limiting the spread of suburbs have attracted new attention, a less far-reaching program has now been enacted in Maryland, and Al Gore embraced the issue at the national level.

The essence of the sprawl problem is the creation of new jobs and housing in a spread-out pattern to which the only practicable access is by automobile. Any solution must induce people to live and work where they can do errands on foot and walk to mass transit for longer trips. To make walking practical, new developments must be built with greater density than suburbanites are used to. Governor Parris Glendening of Maryland has summed these concepts up in the term "smart growth."

Advocates of transit-oriented development argue that denser, pedestrian-friendly areas can be more pleasant places to live, work, and shop than traditional suburbs. However convincing these arguments may be in the abstract, decisions about what actually gets built and lived in are made about particular places and not about categories. Whether these choices are made in the marketplace or by the political system, a multitude of individuals and organizations participate, and density is just one of many factors they consider. Clearly, smart growth won't happen unless it can happen in places where people want to live.

This is the point where NIMBY homeowners become part of the sprawl problem. Antigrowth sentiment is strongest in the most desirable urban and suburban real estate, the copper-pot districts where demand is greatest and new developments have the best chance of financial success. If densities cannot increase here, new housing and jobs will be pushed into the outer suburbs, where there are no neighbors to object. Meanwhile, the minority of the middle class least able to stomach the sprawl environment will move inward, gentrifying poor urban neighborhoods and depleting the stock of affordable housing.

Sprawl now draws wide attention as a social problem. But its two sides—the encouragement and subsidization of low-density construction in outer suburbs and the stifling of concentrated growth in existing communities—are attacked separately. Environmentalists work to stop bad highway and development projects, while planners and architects design better neighborhoods, and a minority of real estate developers tries to build them. Rarely do these groups grapple with sprawl development as a whole.

The most sustained attention to the impoverishment of the human environment by suburbanization has come from the architects and planners of the New Urbanist movement.

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They advocate, design, and occasionally build "neo-traditional," mixed-use communities from the ground up. Writers such as Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, James Howard Kunstler, and Peter Katz show how suburban zoning creates inhuman environments. By separating land uses, forcing buildings away from the street, and requiring enormous amounts of subsidized parking, the zoning rules desiccate public spaces and force people into automobiles. The New Urbanists, experienced in the real-world difficulties of getting something built in the suburbs, are well aware of the roadblocks suburban homeowners often put in the way of the mixed-use, mixed-income communities of their theories. But they view opposition to their plans as nothing more than a misunderstanding of their ideas, a consequence of miseducation if not plain stupidity. And when they fail to convince, the New Urbanists are inclined to appease their opponents, often yielding to the NIMBYs by locating their projects in outer suburbs far away from mass transit.

New Urbanist ideas have reached real estate developers who, perceiving a market demand for a less automobile-dependent life, have begun to redevelop older suburbs into denser, more urban neighborhoods of stores, offices, and homes. But frequent homeowner opposition has made redevelopment of existing suburbs difficult and costly. The added expenses reinforce the normal tendency of the real estate market to concentrate on upper-income sectors, limiting most neo-traditional developments to the high end of the market. And neo-traditional developers are not always unhappy about the obstructions they face. Federal Realty Investment Trust, the largest builder of street-front retail centers on the Main Streets of the nation's suburbs, sees "barriers to entry" as a favorable factor when it makes investment decisions. Zoning rules that prevent competitors from building similar projects in the vicinity guarantee the profitability of Federal Realty's developments.

Environmentalists, too, have a mixed record in confronting the obstacles to transit-oriented redevelopment. With air polluted by increasing automobile traffic and rivers threatened by runoff from lawns and pavement, national environmental organizations have made the fight against sprawl a major goal. Almost all environmentalists now say that development should be focused into dense nodes around mass transit stations. In outer suburbs, where the task is to stop sprawl development, this philosophy expresses itself very logically in alliances with homeowner groups whose social bases are quite similar to their own. But the same alliance becomes more problematic in cities and older suburbs, where density must increase if the sprawl problem is to be addressed. While staffers involved with the issue see NIMBYs as a major obstacle to building communities that are less automobile dependent, they have trouble translating their organizations' theoretical commitments into action. Especially at the local level, environmental groups find it hard to abandon the outlook that sees density as the enemy. Their support for transit-oriented development often withers when there is a chance that something might actually get built.

Hanging over the discussion of suburban sprawl is the refrain that the fault lies with greedy developers, a term that is extraordinarily powerful because so rarely examined. The key to decoding this phrase is that the word "greedy" lacks semantic content. Antipathy to developers has no relation to their degree of avarice—if anything, more hostility is directed at nonprofit builders of low-income housing than at the truly greedy. The adjective functions not to convey meaning but to disguise it, allowing one to criticize the wealthy entrepreneur who builds new houses when the real target is the ordinary people who will live in them.

Not that the real estate industry is blameless for sprawl. From the beginning of suburbia, developers used status distinctions as marketing tools. Builders of early subdivisions encouraged the creation of civic associations to enforce restrictive covenants, and from the forties through the sixties real estate interests opposed racial integration and public housing in close alliance with homeowner groups. Even today, the mechanisms of the real estate market make it easier to develop empty land than to redevelop, and lenders insist on layouts with too much parking and too little access by foot.

But the damage done by sprawl develop-

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ment has set in motion counterforces that are pushing developers toward more humane patterns of land use. Demand for suburban real estate is now most intense near transit stations, and buyers flock to New Urbanist projects. Developers are willing to make a profit wherever it can be made, and as walkable places to live and work are increasingly sought after, builders of traditional suburbs are retooling to construct "infill" projects in cities and older suburbs. In sunbelt cities such as Dallas and Atlanta, where sprawl is at its worst, real estate interests are even toning down their long-standing support for highway transportation and lobbying for expanded mass transit.

In this environment, NIMBYs become the crucial obstacle to smart growth. With infill development banned from most land near mass transit and made difficult where allowed, the supply of transit-accessible housing in middle-class neighborhoods falls far short of the growing demand, and prices shoot upward. When Washington-area suburbanites are polled about housing preferences, they frequently respond that they don't want to live near a subway station because it's too expensive. Farmland remains usable for house construction with far fewer restrictions than suburban property, and the resulting price differentials fuel the continuing spread of subdivisions despite homebuyers' dislike of long commutes.

The automobile-centered model of metropolitan growth is collapsing under the weight of traffic congestion. Market forces are now sending a belated signal that change is needed. Yet sprawl marches on. The suburban pattern of land use was created by governmental action through zoning rules and transportation policies, and without a conscious political choice there can be no reversal of course. The decision to build livable communities in place of sprawl will not be made until we understand and confront the status-seeking that lies behind the suburban status quo. ●

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Genetically Altered Organisms

When the Old Becomes the New

Elof Axel Carlson

THERE HAS been much discussion in magazines, newspapers, and the nightly news about genetically modified organisms. Why did French farmers attack a McDonald's fast food restaurant that used genetically modified vegetables (with introduced genes to generate pesticides) and modified beef (with introduced genes that release growth hormones to speed development and increase the size of cattle)? Why does the Prince of Wales promote organic foods and decry genetic modification as "playing God"? Virtually the entire world reacted to the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1997 as if the "brave new world" had bounded out of a work of fiction into our laps. Are the protesters right? Is all this as legitimate as the fear of nuclear energy or the fear of another thalidomide disaster?

What do we mean by genetically altered organisms? To the anthropologist or geneticist, organisms, including humans, are constantly being altered. That's plain old evolution whether carried out in prehistoric times largely by natural selection or in more recent times (about fifteen thousand years or so to the present) by a variety of conscious and unconscious means of selection. There is scarcely a food we eat (beef, poultry, vegetables, cereal grains) or natural cloth we wear (wool, cotton, silk, linen) that is not the product of deliberate human cultivation and selection. We have consumed our culls, kept our rejects from breeding, and bred our best specimens for what appealed to us. Without intense human effort, few of our domesticated animals or plants would survive in the wild. They are grotesquely artificial compared to their progenitors, if their progenitors even exist today.

We think of genetically altered organisms primarily as products of the technologies of the twentieth century, when selection, which once depended only on a good eye and patience—with Luther Burbank as the exemplar—became a science of complex crosses to get genes from one strain into another. That required a knowledge of Mendel's laws of heredity (how genes are passed from parent to offspring) and later the mathematics of gene distribution in multigenerational crosses and in populations. It also required a knowledge of genetic tools as they developed in the first half of the twentieth century, including the ability to induce mutations. The results were transforming for agriculture. Hybrid corn, rust-resistant wheat, cattle designed for dairy or the butcher's block, and a steady output of varieties were developed at the nation's agricultural field stations by Ph.D.s who knew what they were doing. Today's dinner table may display beef produced almost entirely by artificial insemination, a technology introduced long before the molecular basis of heredity was worked out. The transition from the family farm to agribusiness was gradual, a year-by-year seamless shifting away from the horse and mule of the mid-nineteenth century to the tractors, combines, seed producers, cattle auctions, and other means of mass production of foods for a population that kept doubling and thumbing its nose at Malthus. Throughout this change from family farming to agribusiness, hardly a protest was heard. We welcomed the efficiency of modern farms; we celebrated the bumper crops generated by hybrid corn. Farmers who could afford it sent their children to the state agricultural schools that proliferated after the Civil War. Why then, now, do we suddenly feel an unease about the direction agribusiness is taking us?

We may worry about how mutations arise. Are they natural? Did they have their origin from exposure to ionizing radiation (like the first commercial production of penicillin as an antibiotic)? Are they induced by chemicals? Some of those chemicals are potent poisons and so caus-

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tic we would do well to keep our distance from them (alkylating agents including mustard gas). Yet the mutations produced by any of these agents (called mutagens) are difficult or impossible to distinguish from naturally occurring mutations. The mutagens are used to increase the frequency with which they occur; there are no known mutations unique to physical or chemical mutagens.

Shifts in gene frequency are another cause of worry. Barring natural or human selection, the frequency of a gene remains constant from generation to generation. Humans can, and do, alter gene frequency by creating breeds of animals and plants for a variety of needs for hobbyists, horticulturists, and farmers—and for eugenicists, too. When Francis Galton first conceived of "positive eugenics" in 1883, he urged the best and the brightest to have more than the average number of children. He believed there were genes for intelligence, eminence, and special talents in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Few people and almost no government programs have consciously selected humans for those behavioral attributes. It was a hope that appealed to, but was finally rejected by, intelligent people in the first third of the twentieth century. Much more ominous was the "negative eugenics" movement, whose adherents believed that the species needed culling; that degenerate groups arose and had to be contained or eliminated. As much as 10 percent of humanity was believed to fall into hereditary degenerate classes. Some scientists, especially physicians, favored compulsory sterilization laws for what were called "the unfit." Other scientists lobbied for laws restricting immigration to keep out those alleged to be carriers of defective germ plasm. Ironically "negative eugenics" is a very ineffective means of changing gene frequency in populations. Either the traits are environmentally caused (for example, paupers, vagrants, recidivist criminals), and thus of no genetic significance, or their frequency would not be changed, even over centuries or millennia, by sterilization of those with known genetic disorders (for example, single-gene and polygenic birth defects) because most of the affected children arise from healthy parents.

But the major concern today is focused on molecular technology, which can shift genes from one organism to different species. Genes can be isolated and chemically cloned. Their sequences can be determined. Mutations can be directed, even designed, to alter gene function in novel ways. No doubt much that is possible with molecular technology can and does occur at a tremendously less frequent rate through rare biological events. That does not matter. It is the new that brings uncertainty.

The New Technology

Modern technology uses some old natural standbys to achieve genetic change. All of us harbor genes from other organisms. A baby is likely to be infected with herpes virus. The virus introduces some or all of its DNA into the mucosal cells of the baby's mouth. Years later, the original virus, latent in the cells, may flare up and produce a cold sore. If you had chicken pox as a child, some of that virus DNA ended up in the chromosomes of your nerve cells and the proteins from those genes became embedded in your peripheral nerve fibers. In middle age you may suddenly erupt with a case of shingles. It's your decades-old infection flaring up. It is not the introduction of genes from one species into another that is new, it is the conscious ability to do this by scientific means. Science accelerates overnight what normally occurs at a glacial pace. Before molecular technology, in the 1940s, scientists could cross cognate species (such as the fruit flies *Drosophila melanogaster* and *Drosophila simulans*) and by difficult genetic crosses get one of the chromosomes of *D. simulans* into a *D. melanogaster* descendant and study the effects of the foreign genes that were introduced. That feat was like introducing a chromosome of a chimpanzee into a human. Today genes can be routinely transferred from one species to another by injecting them into cells or infecting cells with them by using an altered virus or synthetic vector.

The tools to achieve these molecular transfers of genes have been widely used since the introduction of what has been called recombinant DNA technology in the 1980s. That technology splices a gene from one organism into a piece of DNA (a virus or similar small object) and then uses that altered object to bring the imported gene to a desired chromosome, often of another species. The technology is assisted

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by tools for sequencing genes, for multiplying those genes, and for determining the functions of genes. A combination of fancy biochemistry and computers can spin out data on what sequences of DNA are genic and what sequences are background noise—relic genes of the past and repetitive DNA—that serves no known function (the bulk of DNA fits that last category). Among the sequences of DNA known to be genic, computers can quickly identify cognate sequences from data bases and their functions can be assigned. The applications of that knowledge are limitless and include the following:

- use of normal genes for gene therapy in those human genetic disorders whose tissues are targeted to receive sufficient numbers of normal genes to provide normal function
- introduction of genes serving as natural pesticides into species lacking those pesticides
- introduction of genes that provide resistance to herbicides
- introduction of genes for the production of vitamins, amino acids, and other food supplements in crop plants that do not provide these in adequate amounts
- introduction of pharmaceuticals for human disorders, the gene products manufactured by genetically altered sheep, cows, pigs, or other animals
- introduction of genes to produce vaccines and anti-tumor agents
- genetic design of pigs and other animals whose organs can be used in human transplants without fear of rejection
- alteration of crop plants so that they thrive in the weather patterns of different countries or regions of a country
- cloning of desired animals for commercial production on a larger scale (perpetuating record-breaking chickens, sheep, pigs, cattle, and so on).

If these new, genetically modified organisms are not already on the market, they are within the reach of today's technologies. Critics will probably sift through the options and accept some and reject others. There is no consistency in what people, individually or as groups, find objectionable. In general, Europeans fear genetically modified foods. They see these as unnatural—although most do not object to the unnatural use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides to improve crop yields. They also don't object to mating members of the same species to introduce genes (for example using strains of wheat from China and strains of wheat from North America). Elsewhere, some object to the new forms of genetic modification on the grounds that introduced genes may lead to unpredictable human health problems. Others object that the altered genes may disturb the ecosystem in some unknown way. But developing countries with hungry mouths to feed happily accept genetically modified rice that provides better nutrition and any genetically modified crop plants that resist a host of infectious diseases. They would welcome crops that grow in regions of low annual rainfall, or in brackish water, or that require less costly fertilizers and less hard human labor to bring to market.

Fears, Legitimate and Illegitimate

As in all new technologies, there is a learning curve for safety and public acceptance. We learn from mistakes, establish or improve regulatory agencies to monitor new technologies, use legal action to make mistakes costly. We did not ban bridge building when the Tacoma Narrows bridge collapsed. We did not ban cruise liners when the *Titanic* sank. We did not stop building dams when the Baldwin Hills dam burst. We continue to import animals and plants from around the world despite dozens, out of many thousands, of imported species that have become pests, weeds, and nuisances. But some industries did not manage to convince the public of their safety. The nuclear power industry failed miserably because it deluded itself with the safety predictions of its engineers; the Rasmussen report, prepared for the U.S. government by engineers on the safety of nuclear reactors, predicted one failure for every ten thousand years of operation, and hardly a decade elapsed before reactors at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl proved the report wrong. It overlooked human error in operating the reactors and faulty design (the Chernobyl reactor would never have been approved in the United States). The industry also had a shameful record of harassing critics and hiding its true costs and government subsidies. It paid heavily in public trust and rightly so.

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There are potential problems with genetically modified organisms. These include

- allergies to protein products (allergens) of introduced genes
- modified crop plants with genetically produced pesticides endangering beneficial insects (for example, monarch butterflies on their migratory paths)
- transfers of genes from modified crops to plants in the surrounding ecosystem by pollination of related species or by aphids and other organisms that may carry cells or partially shredded chromosomes in their mouths and introduce them to a totally different species (a process called the lateral transfer of genes)
- replacing many varieties of a crop with a single variety that later proves vulnerable to a new pathogen
- losing genetic varieties of animal breeds through loss of commercial value
- long-range, unanticipated toxic or carcinogenic effects from eating genetically modified foods
- exploitation of farmers in developing nations by selling seeds that produce sterile crops and force a dependency on the supplier

Many of these, although possible, are unlikely to be a major worry. Untoward events have happened. Monarch butterflies have eaten toxic pollen, for example, but it is unlikely that their flight paths will be so fully blanketed with harmful crops that the species will become extinct. Different types of modified plants can be grown instead and field tested for safety. Other genetic pesticides could be used and field tested. Similarly, if a protein product is an allergen to a significant number of people, other genes can be used to produce products that do not provoke such allergies. As far as future toxicity and carcinogenicity, these are very difficult to test for any product introduced as a preservative, taste enhancer, extender of shelf life, or natural pesticide. We probably consume in our familiar foods hundreds of such agents in small doses and most of these have never been tested because they have been around for many generations. Many perfectly natural products like wheat or peanuts can be infected by mold and produce natural carcinogens such as aflatoxins. The aflatoxins are potent carcinogens, especially for liver cancer. As recently as the 1950s there were epidemics of *Claviceps pupureum*, which can lead to ergotism in infected rye (with effects similar to that of an LSD overdose). Despite such risks, many people will choose organic foods over commercial preparations that use chemical preservatives. But there is no evidence that the hundreds of chemical additives introduced into our foods have increased the frequency of cancers in the population. Age-corrected studies over a century of monitoring have actually shown a decrease of stomach cancers, an increase of respiratory cancers, and virtually no change in all other cancers. No one knows if the decrease in stomach cancer is a bonanza from refrigeration, from less use of smoked fish and meats, or from a shift to other ways of preserving or preparing food. We all know that the respiratory cancers are almost entirely a consequence of tobacco smoking.

Cloning

The movement against genetically modified organisms draws on many fears. Most people realize that if commercially valuable animals and plants can be altered by molecular technology, so too can humans. And for most people this seems wrong. It is a theme that goes back to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's image of Dr. Frankenstein and his uncontrolled monster. It is a theme replayed in hundreds of novels, films, and video dramas that use Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* as their model. A sizable segment of the public expects the genetic modification of humans for medical purposes to lead to abuses and unintended consequences. There are two separate issues here—that of replacing some genes for genetic therapy and that of cloning individuals from a body cell (the fancy word is somatic, a cell that is not a reproductive cell). The first is in the works; within a decade or two after the mapping of the human genome, there will be many potential disorders that can be treated with gene replacement therapy. Once the therapy works, demand will increase, though this may turn out to be a temporary approach. Values often change. At present most parents in most of the world take what nature or fate provides because they are unaware that they have reproductive options. The middle classes of the world are better informed and already use a variety of options now available, including

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treatments for infertility and prenatal diagnosis for birth defects. In the near future a few genetic disorders may be treatable by gene therapy. Many parents may choose that option. In the more distant future parents at risk will be easily identified through the human genome project, which will make detecting mutant genes as easy as using a dictionary. Parents may then choose elective abortion or use in vitro fertilization and return to the uterus only embryos that lack the gene mutations associated with their risk.

The cloning issue is complicated by the reality that we already have natural clones—identical or monozygotic twins. Objections to scientific cloning must avoid claims that would also apply to natural born twins. One major objection could be the unexplored psychological difficulties for the cell donor and the children when an adult relates to his or her cloned twins. This includes concerns about the egoism of the parent who provided the nucleus and about generational conflict if the parent-twin is frustrated by the child-twin's profoundly different generational values. In all likelihood, this would not be a widely used option. It would require a lot of generous acceptance by a partner whose own cell would not be used. It could be a big disappointment if most clonal twins turn out to be different from their co-twin parent, lacking the motivation for success, say, that the parent somehow acquired and could not pass on. Nor is it likely that some totalitarian state would seek to clone armies as somehow more efficient than citizens shaped by highly skilled drill sergeants.

How Should Society Respond?

When new technologies are introduced, governments have to oblige competing interests. The public wants protection from harm, and the manufacturers want protection from unreasonable restrictions, especially laws that ban their products. The compromise that seems to work best is regulation. No one today can market a drug for prescription unless that product has been carefully tested and the evidence of its safety and effectiveness reviewed by a government agency. We welcome this as a public necessity despite the enormous costs of such testing because we do not want another thalidomide disaster. In that well-known case some eight thousand children, mostly German and English, were born deformed, many with missing or deformed arms and legs, when their mothers used thalidomide to minimize morning sickness in early pregnancy. Thalidomide was designed and promoted by its German manufacturer as an over-the-counter sedative and it had not been adequately tested for safety or effectiveness. Warnings of peripheral neuritis and severe constipation among the elderly who used it were ignored. "Corporate responsibility" didn't work. Very different was the experience in the United States. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), through the heroic work of Frances Kelsey, acted effectively, and very few thalidomide babies were born in the United States. Regulation can work. It was only after the thalidomide disaster that Germany, England, and other countries with thalidomide babies established regulatory commissions with the clout that regulators had in the United States.

Because genetic modification has so many applications, no single agency currently exists for their regulation. Human biological products produced by animals or pharmaceuticals produced by animals and plants, including vaccines through food crops, will be regulated by the FDA with the same tough standards it uses for conventional drugs. Some regulations concerning environmental protection already apply to the testing and release of genetically modified plants. If they don't exist, or if they lack sufficient authority, critics should pressure their legislators to provide tough testing standards. Modifications produced by recombinant DNA technology had to go through a stringent process of production and testing either through self-imposed regulation by a new industry or through rules established by government agencies when this new technology first appeared and the industry requested such surveillance. Gene therapy is subject to very demanding regulations by health agencies and hospital policies. Those who violate these guidelines pay a heavy price professionally in the lawsuits that the neglectful institution will face when things go wrong. Although the United States is reasonably well protected by this legal action (as the tobacco and firearms industries are now realizing), this may not be true in countries where the power of individuals to file class action lawsuits does not exist.

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Fear of lawsuits is a powerful motivator for companies that answer to their stockholders.

Far more difficult to regulate are the improbable or unpredictable consequences of using genetically modified organisms. It is unlikely that genes from a modified crop will be transferred by insects (for example, aphids) into other crops or into the natural ecosystem. This risk already exists in nature for those genes currently in their own species, and lateral transfers of them to unrelated life forms (such as from a cereal grain plant to a tree) are exceptionally rare; no known epidemics leading to species extinction or near extinction have arisen from them, at least not in historical times. It may also be difficult to regulate the decisions by farmers on whether to use one highly profitable genetically modified crop or to continue to use less profitable varieties that already exist. While such decisions may not have health consequences, they do raise the concern that unprofitable breeds and varieties will disappear. The problem is as old as agriculture itself. When better varieties come along, the old ones are no longer planted. There are repositories at some universities for different varieties of plant seeds no longer being used commercially, but it might be helpful if the Department of Agriculture provided funding for a few stock centers for storage of seeds (or frozen tissues) of such abandoned varieties.

The FDA established most of its regulations long before modern technology introduced means to move genes chemically from one species into another. It is not clear that those regulations apply to such novel genetic possibilities as the modification of crops to do better in hostile environments, or for use as natural pesticides or herbicides, or to produce special features that farmers and distributors seek—longer shelf life, prevention of bruising, flavor enhancement, and attractiveness to the consumer. Whether there should be such regulations is a matter for governments to debate. It is far better to regulate an industry than to ban it. Bans should only be enforced if a danger is demonstrable and the threatened harm is serious enough (for example, sickness, death, ecological damage). Even the forty-year ban of thalidomide has been overruled, and the drug reintroduced as an allegedly effective agent for leprosy, tuberculosis, certain types of cancer, and possibly other diseases. Presumably the warning labels and the instructions to patients will be effective, and there will be little or no accidental use of thalidomide by women in early pregnancy.

For the most part, genetically modified organisms will not change the diversity of the living world. There are more likely to be losses of species and changes in the ecosystem from population growth, booming economies, and the advance of developing nations into affluence. Our food preferences keep changing. More affluent people like less monotonous diets and can afford to pay for a rich variety. The demand for genetically modified organisms is more likely to increase than to decrease the foods people eat around the world. As a generation or more of people eat such foods without harm, a new generation of users will consider it as natural as riding to work in an automobile instead of on a horse. Will there be some failures? Of course, but they will not be repeated, or they will lead to lawsuits and more regulations to prevent their recurrence. It is unlikely that an epidemic or ecological catastrophe can result from these field-tested genetically altered plants or animals. When recombinant DNA technology was first introduced a generation ago, similar fears were raised. Not a single catastrophe has resulted from that technology. Fortunately, scientists set up very strict safety regulations that worked. Society is so complex today that it is difficult to conceive of runaway disasters that cannot be checked. Anyone with a good memory knows that virtually every new technology has encountered initial resistance and within a decade or less settles into the ordinary. This does not mean that every new technology should be let loose in a laissez-faire world. Doing so gives the public little protection against those who would delude themselves or put quick financial success ahead of the common welfare. Monitor. Debate. Regulate. Is there a more effective way than that? ●

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Legitimating Genetic Engineering

If I am to convince you that it is really in your interests for me to be self-interested, then I can only be effectively self-interested by becoming less so.
—Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*

Susan Wright

THE FIELD of biotechnology was launched in the early 1970s when the ability to perform controlled genetic engineering was first demonstrated at Stanford University by a graduate student in biochemistry, Peter Lobban, and independently by the chair of his department, Paul Berg, and colleagues. Responses spanned the spectrum from optimistic anticipations of a cornucopia of new products to horror that anyone would contemplate putting tumor virus DNA into a common bacterium (a further experiment contemplated by Berg). Applications from novel plants and animals to novel biological weapons were predicted.

As these possibilities were realized in the 1980s and 1990s, resistance elsewhere in the world contrasted with the remarkably passive acceptance of the technology in the United States. The Clinton administration even got away with the argument that labels for genetically engineered foods were unnecessary. News that the former Soviet Union had used its immense biological warfare resources to develop bioweapons produced only a momentary blip in the collective American consciousness. Now that a public debate is emerging in the United States, it may be useful to examine how genetic engineering originally achieved legitimacy.

In the early 1970s, the community of molecular biologists responded to the controversial new development by making a series of decisions that resulted in an international scientific conference at the Asilomar Conference Center, California, in February 1975. Whatever the state of debate about genetic engineering—and twenty-five years later the debate remains substantially unresolved—this conference established the pattern of American policy for controlling the field and served as an influential precedent for policy making abroad.

There is a curious tension in accounts of the Asilomar conference. The conference has been lauded as an exceptional event in which scientists voluntarily sacrificed immediate progress in their research in order to ensure that the field would develop safely. At the same time, many, perhaps most, of the participants resisted questions raised about the implications of their work and simply wanted to proceed. Self-interest, not altruism, was most evident at Asilomar. Eyewitness accounts (and the conference tapes) make it clear that all moves to address the social problems posed by this field in advance of its development were firmly suppressed.

The tension disappears, however, if we understand Asilomar as an effort to justify a form of technology that is likely to be socially disruptive. In essence, Asilomar was about fashioning a set of beliefs for the American people and their representatives in Congress that would allow scientists to pursue genetic engineering under a system of self-governance. Equally important, it was about persuading the scientists to accept the degree of self-sacrifice

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that was needed for such a strategy to be effective.[1]

The Politics of Asilomar

The decisions that led up to the Asilomar meeting were made exclusively within the scientific community. Responding to questions emerging among the elite scientists conversant with genetic engineering in the early seventies, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the National Institute of Medicine turned to Paul Berg for advice on short- and long-term policy. Berg in turn assembled a group of leading molecular biologists and biochemists actually or potentially involved in the new field. Meeting at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in April 1974, the Berg committee produced three main recommendations: first, a pause in some experiments; second, the Asilomar conference; and finally, in a move whose political significance was largely missed at the time, a proposal to the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish an advisory committee to explore the hazards of the new field, develop procedures for minimizing them, and draft guidelines for research. All these recommendations were acted upon. By the time participants gathered at Asilomar, the NIH committee (composed almost exclusively of people with actual or potential interests in genetic engineering) had been appointed, defined as a "technical committee," and charged with investigating the hazards and, on that basis, developing guidelines for NIH grantees. The committee held its first meeting the day after the conference ended.[2]

The formal task for the international conference proposed by the Berg committee was to "review scientific progress in [genetic engineering] and . . . discuss appropriate ways to deal with" the potential biohazards. The *informal* agenda that became apparent during the course of the meeting and afterward, when its proposals were challenged by members of Congress, was to build support inside and outside the Asilomar meeting for the course of action already decided on: the treatment of genetic engineering as a technical issue, to be assessed and controlled primarily by those close to the new field, under the auspices of the NIH, the primary funding agency for biomedical research. In essence, the goal was self-governance.

But achieving that goal was a formidable political challenge for several reasons. First, there was close to absolute ignorance about the possible impact of genetic engineering techniques, reflected in the wide spectrum of creative scenario spinning in the early 1970s. No one could predict what the problems were likely to be, and some scientists said as much. This huge uncertainty was also frankly acknowledged in the organizing committee's final report. Ironically, advances made possible by genetic engineering have generated even deeper uncertainties.

Second, although no one could predict the possible hazards of the techniques, there were some clear ideas about future applications, barring insuperable technical obstacles. As well-informed people were aware by this time, genetic engineering was headed toward industrial, agricultural, and military uses. Virtually all those involved in the early experimental work had anticipated that success would lead to practical applications. As early as 1974, various institutions were already making moves to profit from them, if and when they happened. Stanford University had filed for patents on behalf of Stanley Cohen and Herbert Boyer in November 1974; the British transnational corporation ICI had launched a joint program with Edinburgh University to pursue genetic engineering research and design; American pharmaceuticals had established small research programs to follow the field, and so forth. But such anticipation brought important social consequences. As the British molecular biologist Sydney Brenner (also a member of the Asilomar Organizing Committee) had argued in testimony to the British committee appointed to investigate genetic engineering in 1974, if the technology proved viable, then it would likely be of great interest to institutions like the military and major drug companies, "which can, and probably do, practice secrecy in their activities"—a prediction that turned out to be completely accurate. (And hence the transformation of genetic engineering from an amazingly transparent field into one shrouded in corporate and military secrecy.)[3]

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Third, there was the problem posed by the attentive sectors of the American and other publics around the world, especially those of Western democracies. In the sixties and early seventies, a surge of interest in health, safety, and environmental issues focused public attention on the consequences of scientific and technological advances. In the same period, the antiwar movement alerted the public to the dangers of chemical and biological warfare—in particular, the immense damage caused by the use of herbicides and incapacitating agents in Vietnam. In 1972, the molecular biologist Jonathan Beckwith, a member of the public interest organization Science for the People, issued an eloquent warning about the abuse of science, concluding, as did others in this period—Rachel Carson, Ralph Nader, Barry Commoner—with a call for greater public participation in decisions on the development and use of science.[4]

Such calls sent chills down the collective spines of science establishments in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. Scientific elites used to managing their own affairs reacted with fear and sometimes with outright attacks on statements such as Beckwith's. "Anti-science," "Luddism," "abolitionism," and "pessimism" became code words for the enemy inside and outside the scientific community that had to be neutralized. In 1971, a gathering of scientific leaders from the United Kingdom and the United States at the CIBA Foundation in London (a private foundation supported by the Swiss multinational then known as CIBA-Geigy) worried over these concerns in the following terms: "If the unaccredited [*sic*] public becomes involved in debate on matters as close to the boundary between science and trans-science as the direction of biological research, is there some danger that the integrity of the Republic of Science [*sic*] will be eroded?"[5]

THE DILEMMA facing scientific elites in the West was that if the public was *not* involved in decisions on the control of science, it might decide to withdraw its extraordinarily generous support. (Funding for science in the 1960s had increased exponentially, but the leveling off in the late sixties and early seventies had shown scientists that politicians could be fickle.) On the other hand, if the public were to be involved actively in the governance of science, it might move to limit or even close down fields that it found problematic. Alan Bullock, then vice chancellor of Oxford University, expressed this fear at the CIBA gathering: "I can hear people saying: 'We just can't tolerate the problems that are going to be created by genetic engineering, and we will shut it down as a gift too destructive to the . . . ordinary *mores* of human life.' . . .This is the dilemma."

And finally, there was the problem of restraining runaway scientists who were skeptical of any research controls and wanted to proceed full steam ahead. In 1973, a call for controls on the handling and dissemination of hybrid viruses had met with strong resistance from leading scientists on the grounds that, even though informal and self-imposed, they were an unjustifiable restriction of freedom of inquiry. Correspondence among molecular biologists in the year or so before the 1975 Asilomar conference reveals similar positions in influential quarters. Particularly in the United States, where research laboratories were generally not unionized, heads of labs tended to resist external intervention in their research.[6]

The Asilomar organizers were thus faced with the formidable task of forging a consensus—inside and outside the molecular biology community—that the road already being taken in the United States was the right way to meet (or avoid) all the actual and potential problems. That task might be described as steering a middle course between the Scylla of a public that could be aroused to close down genetic engineering and the Charybdis of "rogue" scientists who would refuse to accept any controls. But such a description would be misleading, because it suggests that the Asilomar organizers played the politically neutral role of moderating between opposed political camps. On the contrary, the organizers were pursuing an agenda: to persuade the American public that genetic engineering was under control, that the scientists responsible for developing this technology knew what they were doing, and that responsibility for the future develop-

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ment of the field was best left in their hands. To achieve these goals, the Asilomar organizing committee had, first, to elicit support from the conference participants and, second, to fashion an image of the problem that would persuade the attentive public, especially watchful members of Congress such as Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), that their (the organizers') solution was the best possible choice for Americans in general, not just American molecular biologists.

Forging the Internal Consensus

The first challenge, then, was that of *unifying* the voice with which molecular biologists spoke to the outside world.[7] But there was no unified voice in 1975. Before the conference, the views of molecular biologists on genetic engineering were all over the map: some denied that there was a problem; some held that the field might pose serious risks; some were focused on issues like biological warfare. The Asilomar organizers addressed this difficulty partly by restricting invitations. Most of the participants were in the mainstream of molecular biology. Relatively few were likely to insist on addressing problematic social applications of their field. Those from abroad saw the conference as an American event, directed largely although not exclusively toward an American audience. Only one member of a public-interest organization was invited, and when he was unable to attend, no one was formally invited in his place. There were no representatives from fields such as ecology or evolutionary genetics who might have contributed different disciplinary perspectives. There were no social scientists, no ethicists, no trade unionists (with the exception of one or two biologists from countries like the United Kingdom, where scientists sometimes opted to join technical unions). There were indeed several lawyers, and they asked some potentially disruptive questions.

Even with these limitations on participation, positions on the genetic engineering problem varied. A second move on the part of the organizers was to restrict the agenda, excluding the awkward questions of biological warfare and human genetic engineering that molecular biologists obviously had no more claim to pronounce on than other people. At the outset, David Baltimore, one of the co-chairs, declared, "This meeting is not designed to deal with [these questions]." Indeed, it was in the interests of the organizers to keep those thorny questions of social use off the Asilomar agenda, because the answers led far away from the NIH and into antiwar, religious, ethical, social, and political arenas. *Excluding social dimensions* was essential to the goal of self-governance.

Nevertheless, there were deep tensions at the conference. Science reporters at the meeting wrote that the majority of participants supported the proposed solution of guidelines and safety precautions; they wanted to see the partial moratorium proposed by the Berg committee lifted so that they could get back to work. But there were several nonconformist proposals that worked against such an outcome.

First, the issue of biological warfare refused to go away. A conference panel on plasmid biology chaired by Richard Novick, a veteran of antiwar efforts to dismantle the U.S. biological and chemical weapons programs, issued a statement calling for a ban, as soon as possible, on "the construction of genetically altered organisms for any military purpose." Second, Science for the People sent an open letter calling for broad public participation in the formulation of public policy for genetic engineering and specifically recommended the involvement of people most at risk—technicians, students, and custodial staff. Third, NIH virologist Andrew Lewis, in a minority statement attached to the report of the conference panel on animal viruses, called for a cautious, step-by-step appraisal of the hazards before work on animal virus DNA proceeded. And finally, one of the lawyers, Alexander Capron, argued that although the NIH might make an initial assessment, the public should be represented in policy making and should look beyond the narrow question of safety to broader questions of human impact. These views threatened to disrupt the middle ground held by the majority; their reception was cool.

There was also the problem of how to handle those who resisted the idea of *any* restriction on their work. Two moves were criti-

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cal for bringing the recalcitrant into line and, more generally, for strengthening the consensus and ensuring that it would be supported beyond the conference. The first, energetically promoted by Sydney Brenner and taken up by microbiologist Roy Curtiss, was the idea of doing genetic engineering in weakened strains of *E.coli*, designed to be "unable to survive outside the test-tube." This proposal did several things. It diverted attention away from difficult social problems. It redefined the genetic engineering problem as a technical one. And it defined scientists as the only people who could provide a solution. Suddenly the talk was of "disarming the bug," and once one accepted that creating a safe bacterial host would solve the safety problem, it became *obvious* that scientists who knew how to do such things should decide. (No matter that the bug turned out to be rather less disarmed than people had hoped, as well as a tiresome nuisance to use: that came later, and would be resolved eventually by abandoning its use.) Optimistic talk of mutant strains and disarmed vectors took over and made it difficult for nonbiologists to engage in increasingly arcane discourse. The gene engineers' New Atlantis edged toward reality.

The second move was to marginalize the views of those who wanted no controls. The organizers were clear that this could be a direct invitation to politicians to intervene. As co-chair Paul Berg reminded the participants:

> If our recommendations look self-serving, we will run the risk of having standards imposed. We must start high and work down. We can't say that 150 scientists spent four days at Asilomar and all of them agreed that there was a hazard—that they couldn't come up with a single suggestion. That's telling the government to do it for us.

These sentiments received strong reinforcement from Brenner: "I think people have got to realize there is no easy way out of this situation: we have not only to say we are going to act, but we must be *seen* to be acting." (Emphasis added)

These moves by the organizers provided both a practical agenda (developing the disarmed bug and controls for its use) and a theoretical justification ("safety") that played the crucial role of unifying a group that initially threatened to fragment into unruly factions. It was crucial, as Berg and Brenner emphasized, that the scientists emerge from the meeting united on a coherent agenda.

Persuading the Attentive Public

Beyond unifying the conference, the Asilomar agenda had a second essential function: to persuade the public that the values and interests of the Asilomar conference were really the values and interests of the whole society. Two themes were crucial. As Berg and Brenner admonished the participants, scientists had to be seen to sacrifice their intense interest in moving ahead. The idea of a moratorium on the most dangerous experiments, the idea that the controls would be extremely rigorous (at least, for a while), the idea that scientists would patiently wait until the disarmed bugs became available and that they were willing to subject their proposals to the scrutiny of the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee—these signs of *responsibility* and *sacrifice* could be used to reassure politicians that scientists were the most qualified people to address the genetic engineering problem. That the sacrifice was real was critical for the success of the effort: As Terry Eagleton says, "If I am to convince you that it is really in your interests for me to be self-interested, then I can only be effectively self-interested by becoming less so."

The other theme was that of *benefits to society*. The public had to be persuaded that if it allowed the scientists to regulate themselves, the fruits of genetic engineering would benefit everyone, not just scientists; and conversely, if the field were restricted by external intervention, everyone would lose. In the press interviews, Asilomar conferees played benefits against hazards. They projected the benefits as real and described the hazards as "potential" and therefore less real. And the menace of the future use of genetic engineering for biological warfare (which leading molecular biologists discussed at more obscure conferences and with their governments) was pushed off into the shadows.

All these strategies helped to promote the Asilomar consensus. Dissident scientists and informed members of the wider public who

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raised questions met with resistance from biomedical researchers. When, following the conference, bio-ethicist Willard Gaylin told the Senate Subcommittee on Health that genetic engineering was too important for decisions to be made exclusively by scientists, he was sharply rebuked by one of the Asilomar organizers for his "antiscientific" position. And when Senator Edward Kennedy proposed legislation that would have taken decision-making authority out of the NIH and given it to a freestanding commission, the biomedical research community launched one of the most intense and widely coordinated lobbying efforts that Congress had ever seen. As an aide to Senator Kennedy remarked in 1978, biologists behaved like "an affected industry." When persuasion didn't work, biomedical researchers used their considerable lobbying power to maintain the Asilomar consensus.

Benefits and Biological Weapons

A counter-argument to this critique of Asilomar is that, after all, no monsters have crawled out of genetic engineering laboratories or industries, and that, on the contrary, genetic engineering really has yielded benefits. In other words, experience confirms the wisdom of the Asilomar process.

I accept the contention that there have been benign uses of genetic engineering. Lifesaving medical products that are difficult if not impossible to make in other ways are examples. Far more strenuous efforts could be directed toward vaccine development, but unfortunately this is not an application that promises large profits for transnational drug corporations. Use of genetic engineering and gene sequencing in research has also produced important advances in understanding the nature of genes and genomes. In particular, we now understand a great deal more about the complexity, fluidity, and adaptability of genomes—to an extent that was unthinkable at the time of the 1975 conference. An irony of these results is that they challenge the mechanistic linearity of the Watson-Crick model of DNA that provided the conceptual basis of genetic engineering in the first place and is still the basis for the widely influential claim underlying U.S. regulatory policy: that the results of gene engineering are predictable.

That justification for the safety of gene engineering is being severely tested by what we know today about the dangers and actual harm of genetic engineering in humans, by the ecological dangers of genetically engineered agricultural plants, by the demonstrated applications of genetic engineering for biological warfare purposes in the former Soviet Union, and, more subtly, in the United States. So although there have indeed been benefits from genetic engineering, that does not mean that the course charted at Asilomar was wise. Far from it: the strong moves to legitimate genetic technology allowed harmful applications to advance outside the reach of either national or international controls. The key example comes from the field of biological warfare.[8]

By the late 1960s, some molecular biologists close to the U.S. government were aware of the likely interest of military establishments, if it proved feasible to control the nature and behavior of micro-organisms. Joshua Lederberg, an Asilomar participant who resisted controls, warned the Geneva Conference on Disarmament about this very possibility in 1970. Other biologists inside and outside the U.S. government recognized this potential early on. The U.K. and U.S. governments were aware of these views, and the sense that molecular biology might eventually overcome some of the existing weaknesses of biological weapons was an important motive for the negotiation of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. The United States and the United Kingdom, both nuclear powers, deemed it prudent to try to remove the option of bioweaponry before these weapons proved attractive to lesser powers. But the political compromises (influenced by military establishments) struck before and during the negotiation of the convention, guided almost exclusively by *realpolitik*, produced a weak legal instrument. The biologists who followed these developments closely must have been aware of the loopholes in the convention's ban on biological weapons—the treaty's failure to address military research, the lack of a clearly defined boundary between offensive and defensive development in the treaty's basic prohibition, the absence of verification instruments, and so forth.[9]

Both the military potential of genetic en-

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gineering and the loopholes in the Biological Weapons Convention through which research and development might pass were clear to well- informed molecular biologists from the outset. At Asilomar, the participants could have used their prestige and authority to call for a comprehensive, worldwide ban on the use of genetic engineering for enhancing the lethality of biological agents for *any* military purpose—the call that Richard Novick and his colleagues on the Plasmid Group had pressed the participants to take up. Instead, the issue was dismissed or marginalized whenever it arose. To raise the specter of new forms of biological warfare would have undermined the claims for a cornucopia of "benefits" that were so essential to legitimating genetic technology.

We now know that the former Soviet Union pursued a huge biological weapons program in the 1970s and 1980s, including genetic engineering of novel pathogens.[10] There is also good evidence that the United States has promoted genetic engineering research on novel biological warfare agents that pushes the envelope of permissible biological activity.[11] In any case, such work stimulates military interest in other countries. Could these programs have been prevented? It's impossible to know, because the attempt to block them was not made. But one thing is clear: the Asilomar leadership preferred not to contaminate a benign image of genetic engineering by addressing its most problematic application.

Myths of the Bargain

In order to move ahead with genetic engineering, the Asilomar scientists proposed a bargain with society: restrictions on their research in exchange for self-governance. They made the bargain palatable to the wider public by making it appear *natural* (scientists were uniquely qualified to understand the problem and develop a solution), *rational* (scientists were making a sacrifice and were therefore responsible), and *universal* (everyone would reap the benefits)—and by marginalizing problems like the prospect of novel biological weapons or genetically engineered humans that clearly fell outside the scope of scientific ingenuity to address.

But both sides of the bargain are myths. It is a myth that most scientists working under competitive pressures can address the implications of their own work with dispassion and establish appropriately stringent controls—any more than an unregulated Bill Gates can give competing browsers equal access to Windows. Sure enough, some five years later, the controls proposed at Asilomar and developed by the NIH were dismantled without anything like adequate knowledge of the hazards. Along with the controls, the fundamental safety principle that genetically engineered organisms should be contained was jettisoned—thereby generating the new problems of genetic contamination that we face today.

It is equally a myth that scientists in this field are self-governing. Even in the sixties and early seventies, the heyday of bountiful government support for molecular biology, research goals were substantially shaped by the needs of federal sponsors. Since the 1970s, as investments in genetic engineering by military agencies and pharmaceutical and agrichemical corporations have risen steeply, both research agendas and the conduct of research have been increasingly influenced (if not dictated) by these huge interests. Needless to say, the legitimation of genetic engineering has taken a whole new turn. ●

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[1]For discussion of the process of legitimation, see Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991).

[2]For further analysis and sources for the history of policy making for genetic engineering, see Susan Wright, *Molecular Politics: Developing American and British Regulatory Policy for Genetic Engineering, 1972-1982* (Chicago University Press, 1994).

[3]Susan Wright and David Wallace, "Varieties of Secrets and Secret Varieties: The Case of Biotechnology," in Judith Reppy, ed., *Secrecy and Knowledge Production* (Cornell University Peace Studies Program Occasional Paper #23, October 1999); revised version forthcoming in *Politics and the Life Sciences*.

[4]Jonathan Beckwith, "The Scientist in Opposition in the

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United States," in *The Biological Revolution: Social Good or Social Evil?*, Watson Fuller, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 296-97.

[5]Gordon Wolstenholme and Maeve O'Connor, eds., *Civilization and Science: In Conflict or Collaboration?* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1972), p. 113.

[6]Sheldon Krimsky, *Genetic Alchemy* (MIT Press, 1982), chs. 3-4; Wright, *Molecular Politics*, pp. 126-136.

[7]For eyewitness accounts of the 1975 conference, see Michael Rogers, "The Pandora's Box Congress," *Rolling Stone* (June 19, 1975), pp. 15-19, 37-38; Nicholas Wade, "Genetics: Conference Sets Strict Controls to Replace Moratorium," *Science* 187 (March 4, 1975), pp. 931-35. The Recombinant DNA History Collection, Institute Archives, MIT, assembled by Charles Weiner is a rich collection on the early history of the controversy, including the 1975 conference.

[8]The claims in this section draw on archival research for "The Origins of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention," forthcoming in Susan Wright, ed., *Meeting the Challenges of Biological Warfare and Disarmament in the 21st Century*.

[9]For discussion of these issues, see Richard Falk, "Inhibiting Reliance on Biological Weaponry: The Role and Relevance of International Law," in Susan Wright, ed., *Preventing a Biological Arms Race* (MIT Press, 1990), pp. 241-266.

[10]Ken Alibek, *Biohazard* (Random House, 1999); Anthony Rimmington, "Invisible Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Soviet Union's BW Program and its Implications for Contemporary Arms Control," forthcoming in Wright, *Meeting the Challenges of Biological Warfare and Disarmament in the 21st Century*.

[11]See, for example, Charles Piller and Keith Yamamoto, *Gene Wars: Military Control Over the New Genetic Technologies* (Beech Tree Books, 1988); Steven Aftergood, "The Soft-Kill Fallacy," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (September/October 1994), pp. 40-45.

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Rebel Redemption Redux

Joshua Michael Zeitz

In the winter of his life, the ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass took up arms in fierce rhetorical battle for the collective memory of the Civil War. "Death has no power to change moral qualities," he admonished a crowd assembled in 1894 at Rochester's Mt. Hope Cemetery, where, nine months later, he would himself be laid to rest. "What was bad before the war, and during the war, has not been made good since the war. . . . Whatever else I may forget, I shall never forget the difference between those who fought for liberty and those who fought for slavery." It was a theme he had been sounding for almost thirty years—that national amnesia must not obscure the crimes of the Confederacy, that the spirit of inter-sectional reunion must not blot out the moral dimension of the Civil War, that "there was a right side and a wrong side in the late war which no sentiment ought to cause us to forget."

Douglass was outraged by the willingness of the victorious to forgive and *forget* the trespasses of the vanquished. In the years following the Civil War, Northerners seemed completely acquiescent in the face of a vigorous cultural and historical assault against commonsense memory. They permitted Southerners to divest the bloody conflict of its ideological and moral components and to refashion the war as an epic family feud in which Johnny Reb and Billy Yank each fought courageously and honorably, buried the hatchet, and became brothers again. While Douglass vigorously rejected "that school of thinkers which teaches us to let bygones be bygones," by the late nineteenth century, more Americans chose to treat the 1860s with wistful but selective retrospection. At battlefield reunions, in popular fiction, inscribed on war memorials, a single theme reverberated clearly: the war was over, its cause was moot, and all should be honored.

No wonder that some seventy-five years after the war, William Faulkner's Colonel Sartoris could honestly respond to the question of why he fought for the Confederacy with "Damned if I ever did know."

Frederick Douglass's lament remains apt 135 years after the close of the Civil War. Responses to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) controversial economic boycott of South Carolina—a sanction that remains in effect, pending the removal of the Confederate flag from state capitol grounds in Columbia—demonstrate the lasting influence of a value-neutral interpretation of the conflict that once pervaded both Civil War–era historiography and virtually every medium of popular culture and art. Although few credible sources convey any sympathy in discussing Confederate flag proponents, most objective news sources assail the emblem for its Jim Crow-era connotations, rather than for its original, equally pernicious meaning. Many papers have contented themselves with repeating the worn platitude that the flag is an emotional issue for many white and black southerners alike. As the Atlanta *Constitution-Journal* editorialized early this year, "people of good will obviously want to find a way out of the impasse—a way that removes the insult felt by African Americans, who see the flag as an emblem of slavery, without denying or insulting the heritage of those white Americans for whom it recalls the honorable aspects of the South's past."

Statements like this are as common as they are wrong. They suggest moral equivalency where none exists. More disturbing still, they emanate from apostles of moderation who should know better. To be sure, there lingers on the political fringes a crackpot contingent

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that vigorously defends the Confederate cause. Witness a letter to the editor from a Georgian whose "ancestors were not traitors to this country just because they resisted a two-faced national government that . . . ordered them to free their slaves without compensation." Or the forty-seven-year-old secretary who pleads, "We're not from up there [the North]. . . . Don't take over our rights," and the thirty-eight-year-old welder from Greenville who boasts, "South Carolina has a history of resisting tyranny."

Happily, these are the voices of *extremism*—citizens practicing their constitutional right to be ludicrous. More disturbing is the tendency of those in the mainstream to place on moral par the sensibilities of blacks who resent the flag and whites who revel in it—and, for that matter, to assume that the Confederate flag should cause pain and insult only to African-Americans. Most of these public figures and journalists mean well. No less a "healer of the racial divide" than Bill Clinton, for instance, says that "as long as waving the symbol of one American's pride is the shameful symbol of another American's pain, we still have bridges to cross in our country." Although he thinks it inappropriate to fly the flag from the South Carolina state capitol, he implies that only the descendants of former slaves might feel revulsion at its sight.

Even such staunch opponents of the Confederate flag as Washington *Post* columnist Richard Cohen frame their argument in such a way as to validate the spirit of the Old South. "The flag is the bloody shirt of Jim Crow and bullies with too much beer," according to Cohen, who believes that in its post-Reconstruction context, the stars and bars are "*no longer* [emphasis added] the proud emblem of a lost cause." In this sense, the liberal Cohen echoes conservative guru William Bennett in the latter's cautious posture toward sons and daughters of the Confederate Army. "Although there were great individuals who fought for the Confederacy," Bennett said earlier this year, "and their individual memory should be honored, what that flag stood for was slavery and the separation of the Union." To their credit, Bennett and Cohen want the flag lowered. But they miss the larger point: those who fought for the "Lost Cause" should not be honored simply because they displayed intrepidity and prowess on the battlefield. What they fought for, rather than how well they fought for it, should determine the measure of respect accorded Confederate soldiers.

CONTRARY TO a version of history long honored in textbooks, film, literature, and public memory, recent scholarship suggests that many Confederate soldiers were perfectly cognizant of the ends for which they fought. This new interpretation raises serious questions—about how a contrary historical myth ever came to hold such wide currency; about balancing moral culpability with the sentiments of Confederate descendants who are understandably hesitant to disavow their forebears; and finally, about the message implicit in displaying the rebel emblem anywhere, in any context.

Until recently, historical consensus held that Civil War soldiers were driven by a miscellany of impulses, most of them vague: courage, honor, local ties, combat unity, manly valor. Conspicuously missing from that list were ideological commitments to the preservation or abolition of slavery, to democratic or republican principles, to a perpetual union, or to states' rights.

Writing in this vein fifty years ago, Bell Irvin Wiley, once the leading authority on Civil War military culture, claimed that "it is doubtful whether many [Southern soldiers] either understood or cared about the Constitutional issues at stake." The conviction that soldiers from both the North and South fought for reasons entirely disassociated from the larger political questions of the 1850s and 1860s remains fashionable to this day. In 1992, the commander of the New York chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans proudly announced that "it wasn't because our fathers knew what they were fighting for that they were heroes. They didn't know what they were fighting for, exactly, and they fought on anyway. That's what made them heroes."

This view of Civil War combat motivation relates to a longer historiographical tradition dating back to the 1930s. Writing amid a popular consensus that the First World War had been an avoidable affair, historians such as

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Avery Craven and James G. Randall deemed the Civil War the product of a "bungling generation" of ambitious, cynical politicians who cared nothing about slavery and who accidentally forced the two sections to the brink of war. These scholars ranked the Civil War an unnecessary conflict, one brought about by individuals, not by ideas.

By the late 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement obliged a new generation of historians to re-locate ideology as a compelling cause of the Civil War. Yet it has been far easier for Americans to concede that politicians in the 1850s and 1860s meant what they said, when they defended or opposed the "peculiar institution," than to allow for the possibility that nine hundred thousand regular Confederate soldiers actively supported—and sacrificed or died for—the preservation of slavery.

The lasting influence of this view finds reinforcement today in the reading public's intense fascination with military—at the expense of political—history, and it is critical to any understanding of the tepid reaction to South Carolina's current-day dilemma. As a columnist for the *Boston Globe* recently argued, "Southerners have every right to be proud of their heritage. . . . Let the South honor its heroes. Race relations aren't advanced by denigrating a symbol good Americans died for . . ." The ghost of Colonel Sartoris lives on.

In two slim but expert volumes, Princeton University professor James M. McPherson, a Pulitzer Prize–winning author, responds to these value-neutral accounts and argues that "research in the letters and diaries of Civil War soldiers will soon lead the attentive historian to a contrary conclusion. Ideological motifs almost leap from . . . these documents." After reading over 25,000 personal letters and 249 journals penned by Union and Confederate troops, McPherson concludes that a "large number of those men in blue and gray were intensely aware of the issues at stake and passionately concerned about them."

On one level, Southern soldiers unabashedly invoked the term "slavery," but not as one might expect. According to McPherson, "these soldiers were using the word slavery in the same way that Americans in 1776 had used it to describe their subordination to Britain." Indeed, the Confederate paper trail is rife with direct references to the imperative of preserving the republican principles of 1776, especially property rights, widely viewed as a defense against political "slavery" and "subjugation."

Essentially, Southern soldiers in the 1860s borrowed heavily from the political discourse of the American Revolution, when colonial leaders routinely described violations of natural and common law as enslavement. Gradually, as the logical implications of their opposition to metaphorical slavery became clearer to the revolutionaries, many came to believe that *actual* slavery might be inconsistent with natural law. Bernard Bailyn labeled the ensuing phenomenon "the contagion of liberty"—the widespread, critical re-examination of an institution that seemed in conflict with the theoretical underpinnings of the colonial cause. This ideological development led to the gradual abolition of chattel slavery in the newly formed Northern states. In the South, however, such introspection could not overcome compelling economic and social interests that made slavery essential, either to the preservation of the cash crop system or to the maintenance of social order (read, white supremacy). By the 1860s, when they spoke of slavery, Civil War soldiers fighting for either army were discussing two very different ideas. It was this glaring inconsistency that led Abraham Lincoln to complain of Southerners that "the perfect liberty they sigh for [is] the liberty of making slaves of other people."

By the 1860s, Confederate soldiers saw no contradiction in claiming, "We are fighting for our liberty against tyrants of the North . . . who are determined to destroy slavery." Or, as a private in the Fifty-sixth Virginia explained to his wife, "If we should suffer ourselves to be subjugated by the tyrannical government of the North, our property [slaves] would all be confiscated . . . & our people reduced to the most abject bondage and utter degradation." To white southerners—almost a million of whom served in the armed forces—slavery was a political condition that resulted from the loss of property and vested rights.

A lieutenant in the Mississippi Twenty-

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eighth declared that "[t]his country without slave labor would be completely worthless." To another soldier, the war's objective was equally clear: protecting "rights and property bequeathed to us by our ancestors." Other Confederates preferred to couch their objectives in language carefully developed over the course of the antebellum period; rather than defend bondage or slavery—terms they seemed implicitly to acknowledge were laden with negative connotations—they instead insisted that the Southern struggle was to defend "the institutions of the whole South," or "our own social institutions," and they fiercely resisted, as did one South Carolina planter, the designs of Northern "fanatics to interfere with our domestic affairs."

One especially popular Civil War sophism—often used to immunize the Confederate army against the judgment of history—is that the struggle was a "rich man's war, poor man's fight." Indeed, only one-third of Confederate soldiers were slaveholders or members of slaveholding families, a statistic that leads reasonably to doubts about the pervasiveness of Southern pro-slavery sentiment. But McPherson reminds readers that non-slaveholders also had a commanding property interest in the institution. "That property was their white skins," he explains, "which put them on a plane of civil equality with slaveholders and far above those who did not possess that property." McPherson highlights a quirk of Southern social order that would continue to vex the region's populists and liberals well into the twentieth century. In her famous article, "Two Men and a Bargain," Lillian E. Smith wrote in 1943 that "[o]nce a time, down South, a rich white made a bargain with a poor white . . . . You boss the nigger, I'll boss the money." And so, according to Smith, whites "segregated southern money from the poor white and they. . . segregated the Negro from everything." Her point was essentially sound: long before anyone in the 1940s could remember, those white Southerners who had nothing to gain and perhaps something to lose from the codification of black inequality were tempted by a self-defeating bargain. Before 1865, slavery—and afterward, Jim Crow—bought poor and middling whites a measure of social status in a region notorious for its rigid class stratification.

Indeed, correspondence and diaries by slaveholding and non-slaveholding soldiers alike reflect a conscious association of the war effort with the preservation of the Southern racial order. "I never want to see the day when a negro is put on an equality with a white person," wrote a Louisiana artillery man in 1862. "There is too many free niggers . . . now to suit me, let alone having four millions." Along similar lines, a North Carolina dirt farmer denounced Northern invaders who were "trying to force us to live as the colored race." Many Confederates also feared the looming specter of miscegenation. "Better, far better! endure all the horrors of civil war," wrote a Virginia schoolteacher to his father, "than to see the dusky sons of Ham leading the fair daughters of the South to the altar." Such ruminations may not have been unusual. A Union private in the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin wrote with bewilderment to his family, describing a group of Confederate prisoners of war he had helped capture in Atlanta. "Some of the boys asked them what they were fighting for, and they answered, 'You Yanks want us to marry our daughters to the niggers.'"

Of course many Southern soldiers didn't address slavery categorically in their letters and journals. McPherson found that of his sample, over half of all Confederate officers and one-third of enlisted men discussed "ideological themes"—usually general musings about liberty, the Spirit of '76, republicanism, Southern traditions, and institutions. Only one out of five actually defended slavery in explicit terms. But even the absence of dialogue tells us something. McPherson notes that "ironically, the proportion of Union soldiers who wrote about the slavery question was greater. . . . Emancipation was a salient issue for Union soldiers because it was controversial. Slavery was less salient for most Confederate soldiers because it was not controversial. They took slavery for granted as one of the Southern 'rights' and institutions for which they fought, and did not feel compelled to discuss it." Whereas McPherson found Northern officers and enlistees engaged in a heated, four-year debate

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over slavery, "only 20 percent of the [Confederate] soldiers avowed explicit pro-slavery purposes . . . [but] none at all dissented from that view." Instead, rebel soldiers "preferred to discourse upon liberty, rights, and the horrors of subjugation." There is another response to the reasonable objection that ordinary soldiers should not be held historically accountable for the political and ideological aims of the Confederate government. Although it is true that the Confederacy instituted a military draft, Columbia University professor Eric Foner reminds his readers that "[i]n large areas of the Southern upcountry"—places like Western Virginia, East Tennessee, West [North] Carolina—"initial enthusiasm for the war was succeeded by disillusionment, draft evasion, and eventually outright resistance to Confederate authority—a civil war within the Civil War." Above and beyond outright draft evasion, more than a hundred thousand troops, 11 percent of the Southern armed forces, deserted. "In contrast to twentieth-century wars in which most soldiers have been draftees or long-service regulars," McPherson writes, the armies of the Civil War era were made up mostly of volunteers. With some exceptions, Confederates who fought against the Union did so of their own volition; those who objected wholly or in part to the rebel cause had ample opportunity to evade the Richmond government's loose draft enforcement. Many did.

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, the thorny issues of constitutional revision, civil rights, and impeachment provided the nation with little time to reflect on its shared experience. It was only in the 1880s, with Reconstruction a dead letter and the postwar pandemonium settled, that both sections of the country turned to the task of interpreting and commemorating the war.

Historian Gaines Foster has traced a critical transition that occurred in this decade, during which the Confederate legacy passed from the hands of what he terms the "Virginia coalition"—a group of hard-line, unreconstructed rebels who had first entrusted themselves with the preservation of official war memory—to veterans representing a new, emergent middle class. The "Virginians," the first fomenters of Confederate revivalism, included such figures as Jubal Early, B.T. Johnson, Fitz Lee, and W. P. Johnson, most of whom shared aristocratic credentials, nominally distinguished war records, and a venomous hatred of all things Northern. Although their calls for defiant commemoration met with widespread apathy throughout the 1860s and 1870s, and although they were fated to become marginal figures at best, these men ultimately formulated the ideological underpinnings of what would become, under new leadership in the 1880s, the standard Southern interpretation of the Civil War.

The central themes of this historical rendering were veneration of an antebellum South that was both aristocratic and, by implication, better mannered than its avaricious, modernized counterpart (the North); confirmation that secession had been a legal response to incursions against states' rights, rather than a revolutionary action; and finally, insistence that slavery had been only a remote cause of the war. As Hunter McGuire explained in a historical report for the Grand Camp of Confederate Veterans of Virginia, "however brave" rebel soldiers had been, to acknowledge that they fought to preserve slavery would only "hold us degraded rather than worthy of honor . . . our children, instead of revering their fathers will be secretly, if not openly, ashamed." With the nettlesome issue of slavery thus disposed of, new officials of the Confederate memory machine could stress more desirable sub-themes of the Lost Cause saga, including Confederate respect for social discipline, Southern womanhood, and private property.

The 1880s and 1890s saw the rapid proliferation of Confederate commemoration, as a new trio of associated organizations—the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the United Sons of Confederate Veterans (USCV)—institutionalized the related themes of inter-sectional reconciliation and a vague form of Southern pride, rooted in heritage but devoid of overt ideology. These groups appealed to a far wider swath of the white Southern population than their "Virginia coalition" predecessors, in part because their leaders assumed a less elitist posture, but also because

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they offered a compelling post-war epilogue: according to Foster, they placed "emphasis on reconciliation and the experience of battle," permitting rank-and-file veterans and their families to be patriotic Americans without repudiating their wartime legacy. The first large-scale manifestation of this new wave of Confederate commemoration occurred in May 1890, when between a hundred thousand and a hundred and fifty thousand onlookers gathered in Richmond for the unveiling of a statue of Robert E. Lee. Throughout the late 1880s and 1890s, hundreds of towns across the South undertook the commission of similar monuments to their heroes and war dead. Unlike the initial wave of graveyard memorials that Southerners unveiled in the 1860s, these structures tended to be placed in town squares and by county courthouses, and in keeping with the new emphasis on comradeship in arms, more often than not they featured statues of Confederate veterans.

More sweeping still were the annual reunions of state UCV chapters, and the perennial, section-wide UCV meeting, which drew crowds ranging as high as a hundred thousand. Confederate veterans were at the center of these celebrations, reinforcing the UCV's emphasis on military honor. Naturally, the Confederate battle flag enjoyed a prominent place in the festivities.

Beyond their ability to draw impressive numbers at memorial events, the UCV, UDC, and USCV enjoyed a great deal of political influence in determining how future generations of Southerners would understand the events of the 1860s. During the war, for instance, Confederate soldiers had eagerly embraced the sobriquet "reb," but the new guardians of Southern memory insisted the term violated their revision of the war's status from revolution to constitutional conflict. "Was your father a Rebel and a Traitor?" asked a typical chapter leaflet. "Did he fight in the service of the Confederacy for the purpose of defeating the Union, or was he a Patriot, fighting for the liberties granted him under the Constitution, in defense of his native land, and for a cause he knew to be right?" Keeping to this revisionist tendency, rather than propagate undignified titles like "the late war," (too vague), the "Civil War" (too revolutionary), or "The War of Rebellion" (far too revolutionary), in 1899 and 1890, the UCV and UDC approved resolutions encouraging the conflict's official designation as "The War Between the States." Successive generations of Southern school children would learn it as such.

While white Southerners were reconceptualizing the war's meaning, many white Northerners acceded to a similar revisionist impulse influenced by a reverence for shared military experiences and progressively hardened racial sensibilities. Military historian Gerald Linderman has found that during the war many ordinary soldiers had grown "to resent unchanging civilian allegiance to the precepts with which the war began. . . . Those who continued to kill one another often felt less estrangement from their victims than those in whose behalf they had gone to fight." A telling example of this transformation was Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.—a scion of Boston's Brahmin society who began the war as a firebrand abolitionist. After enduring four years of grim combat, Holmes found his faith in causes tempered. Decades later, he reflected, "That faith is true and adorable which leads a soldier to throw his life away in obedience to a blindly accepted duty, in a cause which he little understands, in a plan of campaign of which he has little notion, under tactics of which he does not see the use." In effect, *action*, rather than belief, was the true test of faith and courage. In his intellectual journey from idealist to pragmatist, Holmes may have been similar to other men of the Civil War generation.

Indeed, Gaines Foster has made a compelling argument that toward the close of the nineteenth century, veterans and the public at large came to view the martial achievements of both sections as equally praiseworthy. A powerful combination—of combat-induced identification with the enemy, the passage of time, and the disillusioning experience of Reconstruction—led many Northerners and Southerners alike to revel in shared military glory without dwelling too much on the causes of the conflict itself.

This spirit of reconciliation, and its empha-

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sis on combat over ideology, produced a new vogue in the late 1880s: Blue and Gray reunions. Over the next several decades, veterans and enthusiasts attended hundreds of battlefield and regimental reunions at which standard etiquette held that soldiers from both sides be honored guests. In 1887, for instance, Boston's Granddaughters of the American Revolution post hosted members of Richmond's Robert E. Lee Camp of Confederate Veterans, who were treated to a sightseeing tour of the city formerly regarded as the unofficial capital of abolitionism. That same year, the Seventh Connecticut held a reunion at which the honoree was Confederate Colonel Charles Olmsted, whom the regiment had captured during the war. Two years later, the Society of the Army of the Cumberland held a Blue-Gray reunion of a scale that would become increasingly common: twenty-five thousand people gathered at Crawfish Springs, near the Chickamauga Battlefield, for a picnic and public ceremony. The best known of the official Civil War reunions, sponsored by the United States government in 1913, brought surviving Confederate and Union veterans back to Gettysburg on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle. In a now-famous moment, the former combatants re-enacted Pickett's charge, and the nation went misty-eyed when silver-haired Billy Yanks leapt from behind the stone wall to embrace their rebel assailants.

Reflecting and nourishing the nation's fascination with all things military, the *Century*—a popular, wide-circulation magazine—ran an acclaimed series of articles between 1884 and 1887 on "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War." The journal's editors explained that "[n]o time could be fitter for a publication of this kind than the present, when the passions and prejudices of the Civil War have nearly faded out of politics, and its heroic events are passing into our common history where motives will be weighed without malice, and valor praised without distinction of uniform."

FURTHER AIDING the process of historical revisionism was a highly successful Southern literary assault on public memory.

Beginning in the 1880s, a host of Southern writers—most notably Joel Chandler Harris, John Easton Cooke, Thomas Nelson Page, and Sara Pryor—flooded the nation's mass-circulation fiction market with local-color stories depicting the antebellum South's refinement and civilization. To court Northern readers (something they did exceedingly well), these writers scrupulously avoided topics that might rekindle old political flames and instead wove tales replete with beautiful plantation belles, dashing cavaliers, and dull-witted but cheerful black slaves. One study finds that between 1875 and 1900, Northern magazine fiction most commonly described black freedmen as "simple," "fervent," or "good-humored," qualities that harmonized with Page's stock story line: out-of-town traveler (often from the North) meets "old retainer" (a former slave remaining in his master's service) who, after a great deal of prodding, reminisces wistfully of a bygone age when "nuttin warn too good for the niggers."

Above all, these writers celebrated the Southern heritage without dwelling on the nagging questions of slavery and treason. "[F]or those who knew the old Country as it was then," reads one of Page's novels, "and can contrast it with what it has become since, no wonder it seems that even the moonlight was richer and mellower 'before the war' than it is now." Such sentimentality and romance played well with Northern audiences, whose memory of slavery and capacity for race liberalism had evaporated considerably since Reconstruction. Over were the days when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could enrage a nation of readers with its depiction of slavery's violent assault on the cherished institutions of family and Christianity.

Among the most successful and enduring artistic apologies for antebellum Southern culture were Thomas Dixon's trilogy (*The Leopard's Spots*, 1902; *The Clansman*, 1905; *The Traitor*, 1907)—adapted by director D. W. Griffith into the popular film *Birth of a Nation*—and Margaret Mitchell's classic, *Gone With the Wind*, 1936, which sold a remarkable 3.5 million copies in less than a decade and was made into an enormously popular movie. Dixon didn't stop at glorifying the antebellum South. His explicitly avowed purpose in writing *The Clansman* was to recount "the bold attempt of Thaddeus

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Stevens [a radical Republican congressman] to Africanize the ten great states of the American Union." Mitchell's work, though more subtle and certainly less ferocious, nevertheless whitewashes the antebellum South and conveniently ignores the misery and indignity suffered by four million enslaved people on the eve of the war.

The lasting acclaim each author enjoyed, and the conspicuous absence of a literary counter-assault, underscores the extent to which trends like Social Darwinism and mass immigration had, by the early twentieth century, eroded what little Northern commitment to race liberalism survived Reconstruction.

"I'd be with my people, right or wrong," Shelby Foote proclaims. "If I was against slavery, I'd still be with the South. I'm a man, my society needs me, here I am." Foote is living proof that many Americans—especially those who are most interested in the Civil War—remain under the spell of a century-old tendency to mystify the Confederacy's martial glory at the expense of recalling the intense ideological purpose associated with its cause.

Of all people, Foote should know better. He is not merely the author of three especially popular volumes about the war. He is also the descendent, on his mother's side, of East European Jews. If parallels between slavery and *shoah* have ever occurred to him, he gives little indication of it. The Confederate flag, he explains, "stood for law, honor, love of country." It was only later that "the good ol' boys in the pickup trucks" misappropriated the banner and altered its meaning. One suspects that Foote would not agree that the swastika was once a perfectly respectable symbol of law, honor, and national pride, before it was lamentably hijacked by skinheads in the 1960s and 1970s.

Shelby Foote is living testimony to the failure of many Civil War enthusiasts and public figures to disavow the *American* army that fought under the rebel banner. As a nation, we remain very much under the spell of Robert E. Lee, even as we decry slavery and its legacy.

When state and municipal governments accord the rebel flag honor or recognition, they sanction all that the flag stood for: treason, slavery, and a race state. When the rest of us soft-pedal that official endorsement, when we hem and haw in deference to the memory of the ordinary Confederate soldier, we demonstrate a blissful ignorance of history.

The clamor over the Confederate flag is sure to continue. The NAACP has pledged to press forward with its boycott until the banner is removed from South Carolina's statehouse grounds, and other states, like Mississippi, can expect a protracted battle to remove the emblem from their state flags. We have a unique opportunity to reconsider our national love affair with the Lost Cause and examine in a more thoughtful way the ideological dimensions of the Civil War. ●

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Turning Pages

With this issue, after eighteen years of graceful and incisive editorial work, Brian Morton steps down as book review co-editor. He will continue to be involved with the magazine.

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Violence and Hypocrisy

Laurie Calhoun

IMAGINE: *You awaken in the middle of the night to the sound of piercing sirens. Suddenly the ceiling comes crashing down. You are trapped under rubble, bones broken, joints popped from sockets. Blood pours down your face from the gash on your head. Children are shrieking in the next room. The bombs continue to fall; your head begins to throb. You don't know how much longer you have to live or if you'll ever see your family again.*

Have you been wronged?

I presume that you need no further information to answer this question. You have been wronged. Regardless of your political affiliations, regardless of where you happen to live, regardless of who you are, you have been wronged. Even if you were a convicted felon, guilty of a heinous crime, the above treatment would constitute "cruel and unusual punishment," prohibited by law. Yet, according to just war theorists, whether or not you have been wronged is supposed to be a function of the past actions of another person altogether, your leader. If your leader is a criminal, then you are "collateral damage," regrettable but unavoidable. If your leader has committed no crimes against humanity, then you have been unjustly attacked, unjustly terrorized, and unjustly harmed.

Let us make the case a bit more detailed. *You voted for the opposition. Your candidate did not win the most recent election. The winner went on to abuse power and commit crimes.* Are you responsible, in any sense, for the crimes committed by your leader, whom you never supported in any way whatsoever? Are you any less the victim of an unjust attack than are the people unlucky enough to have been on board an airplane hijacked by fanatics?

We could make the case more controversial and complex. *You voted for your leader, whom you believed at the time to be a person of integrity and moral vision. You were wrong. Your leader victimized innocent people and abused his power to achieve personal ends.* Despite these facts, have you not still been wronged?

Of course some inhabitants of nations led by criminals support their government. So let us consider this possibility too: *You voted for and continue to support the government in power. Your leader carefully explained to you and your compatriots that national self-interest and honor mandated the invasion of territories that had been unjustly appropriated by "The Evil Enemy." You never heard any other version of the story.* Does being brutally attacked by your leader's enemies have any more tangible effect than to strengthen your belief in the lies of your leader?

The options are simple: Either you support or once supported the regime in power or you do not and never did. (Children always fall into the latter category.) But your personal attitude toward your own government does not seem to be particularly relevant in determining culpability for the unfortunate circumstances in which you currently find yourself. You are trapped under fallen beams and rubble, injured, frightened, traumatized, and uncertain whether you will escape alive. Yet, as far as you can tell, you have personally committed no crime. If you are a soldier, you were legally obliged to follow the orders of your superior officer. That you happen to have believed your leader's lies seems to be irrelevant to the question of whether you have been wronged. How could the answer to that question be a function of your personal beliefs? What do your leader's actions have to do with what is being done to you? Certainly you have an interpretation, true or false, plausible or implausible, of your leader's actions, at least of the ones that

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you know about. But what does *your* interpretation have to do with the actual wrongness of your leader's policies?

Even if you are among the soldiers who committed crimes against other people, what is being done to you right now, as you lie in your pajamas, months after having followed the orders of your leader, does not seem to be right. If you are guilty of a crime, then you should be tried. But what does your guilt have to do with the children shrieking next door, even if they are *your* children, and even if *you* committed (unwittingly, since no soldier follows orders "to murder") crimes?

The Just War Tradition

War has long been supported by human societies, through the funding of military institutions and the production of deadly weapons. Many people therefore assume that war is sometimes just and permissible, or even obligatory. Wars do occur, and the pressing question, according to many thinkers, is how to distinguish the just from the unjust. Basic tenets of "just war theory" were articulated by a cluster of medieval thinkers, who maintained that war would be morally justified if and only if certain conditions were met. Although there have been some disagreements over the precise articulation of the theory, the just war tradition has since the seventeenth century distinguished two broad sets of conditions, *jus ad bellum*, for the just initiation of a war, and *jus in bello*, for the just conduct of a war.

TRADITION HAS it that a *just war* must be waged with right/moral intention and must have an objective, not merely subjective or selfish, aim. The gravity of the situation must warrant the extreme measure of war, and there must be a reasonable chance for success. War must be publicly declared by a legitimate authority, and recourse to force must be a "last resort." Once war has been waged, the following additional precepts apply: The means deployed may not exceed what is warranted by the cause. Combatants are through capture rendered noncombatants, and noncombatants are immune from belligerent attack.

Noncombatant Immunity

Given the inevitability of civilian casualties in modern war, one might think that, according to the requirements of just war theory, all wars are unjust. But the "immunity" of noncombatants has been understood historically to permit war. Most notably, Catholic theologians have interpreted noncombatant immunity using "the doctrine of double effect." This principle specifies that bad consequences such as civilian deaths (euphemistically referred to by modern military personnel as "collateral damage") are permissible during wartime, even if foreseen, so long as they are unintended (neither as ends in themselves nor indirectly as means). Whether "collateral damage" victims have been wronged is supposed to be a function of the intentions of the people who dropped the bombs and the relative weight of devastation vis-à-vis the military objective achieved. Somewhat suspiciously, the answer given by military authorities always seems to be "no." Though now dead, "collateral damage" victims have not been wronged by their killers, for the war is a just one, the victims were not targeted, and an important objective was achieved through bombing in the vicinity.

By emphasizing the importance of objectives achieved, just war theorists underscore the requirement of proportionality, as Robert Phillips explains in *War and Justice*: "the permission of collateral evil must be justified by considerations of proportionate moral weight." But the "proportionality" requirement is problematic, as Michael Walzer openly admits in *Just and Unjust Wars*: "Certainly we want political and military leaders to worry about costs and benefits. But they have to worry; they can't calculate, for the values at stake are not commensurate—at least they can't be expressed or compared mathematically, as the idea of proportion suggests. How do we measure the value of a country's independence against the value of the lives that might be lost in defending it?"

The most important question that Walzer raises (apparently unintentionally) is this: costs to whom? Centuries ago, when just war theory originated, political leaders were simultaneously military leaders whose willingness to fight courageously alongside their soldiers evinced their own sincerity regarding their

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causes. In contrast, modern leaders do not seriously risk damage to their own persons when they wage conventional wars against other nations. Today civilians and low-ranking soldiers bear the brunt of leaders' decisions to engage their nations in war.

Military authorities apply the "doctrine of double effect" to cases such as the scenario described above, explaining that you have not been wronged by your killers, since the requirements of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* have been satisfied. Certainly you have been harmed, but your leader, who acted in ways that provoked military action on the part of his enemies, is ultimately responsible. However, from your own perspective, you are in effect being punished for another person's crimes.

Although its military utility cannot be denied, "the doctrine of double effect" ultimately exonerates everyone who kills for what he takes to be good reasons. The actual deaths effected can always be construed as foreseen but unintended. Tragically, the history of warfare is a long concatenation of deadly conflicts between groups led by commanders who have claimed to be fighting for justice and peace. But what rational person would act for what he or she takes to be bad reasons?

A Closer Look at History and Grounds

The most influential just war theorists throughout history have been Christians such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Francisco Suárez. To some this comes as a surprise, given the apparent pacifism of Jesus Christ, who famously exhorted his followers to "turn the other cheek" in the face of violent assault. Countless Christians have found ways to reconcile the apparent teachings of Christ with their own acts of violence in religious war after war. Upon closer analysis, this apparent conundrum is easily resolved.

Augustine, arguably the father of just war theory, distinguishes the "City of Man" from the "City of God," maintaining that, practically speaking, we should adhere to the conventions of our societies while inwardly attempting to align our souls with God. Leaders were believed by Augustine to be in some sense doing God's will, since everything on earth is in its place through the grace of God. This picture was of course capitalized upon by leaders throughout the Middle Ages. But with the separation of church and state in the modern world, leaders cannot, with any shred of plausibility, claim to derive their policy decisions directly from God. One of the legacies of the Protestant Reformation was a thorough unmasking of pretentious religious and political leaders who claimed to have special connections to the Almighty. In democratic societies, political authorities no longer can seriously claim to have more direct access to God than has the person on the street. In the modern world, political leaders are given the legal power to wage wars despite the fact that political leaders *are* people on the street, appointed as leaders by themselves or their citizenry. So just as it seems safe to say that some of the people walking the street are bad, evil, immoral, and/or ignorant, we can be sure that some leaders are no less. When two leaders adept at the use of moral rhetoric come into conflict, we can be sure that at least one of them is mistaken, since the claims that they make are mutually inconsistent.

Just war theory evolved out of controversial metaphysical assumptions of Christianity, most notably that there is an afterlife. Augustine maintained that what really matters, in the grand scheme of things, is purity of conscience, and this God alone can assess. Although we may think that the actions of some of our fellow human beings are wrong or evil, we cannot know the motives behind their actions, nor whether they had any but the best of intentions. Given his skepticism about human moral judgment, Augustine concluded that it is best to abide by the laws of the society in which we live, to follow the orders of our leaders, and to know that, ultimately, justice will be done regardless of the injustices suffered during our ephemeral time as terrestrial beings.

A profoundly important point emerges: given Augustine's metaphysical beliefs, anything that transpires on this planet is of relatively little consequence. Obviously, to one who believes that justice will be done in the afterlife, the harsh reality of "collateral damage" killings of the innocent is not a particularly grave

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problem. For justice always prevails in a worldview such as Augustine's. Human beings may mistakenly harm, punish, even execute other people, but in the grand scheme of things, justice will be done. Although Augustine (along with some other Christians) is skeptical about the power of human beings to render judgment upon others (given the inaccessibility of others' intentions), he is not at all skeptical about the existence of God, the ultimate arbiter in matters of justice. There is no question that the falsely executed will be recompensed, and undetected sinners, including murderers, will be punished.

What is peculiar about the influence of just war theory in later centuries is the extent to which its tenets have been retained while the metaphysics have been abandoned. Today a secularized version of just war theory is built into military protocol. Leaders of all nations appeal to some version of just war theory in motivating their populace to conduct war when "duty calls." In fact, what survives as "just war theory" is a powerful rhetorical weapon, involving fallacious appeals to authority and tradition and playing upon human frailty, especially the need to believe that we are good and our adversaries evil. Through appeals to "justice," leaders miraculously galvanize their troops to kill people who have nothing whatsoever to do with the criminal actions supposedly justifying recourse to war. In the modern Western world, the ongoing development of weapons of mass destruction progressively exacerbates the danger to civilians of decisions to wage war. Were the early expositors of just war theory alive today, some might very well declare that its requirements cannot be satisfied, given the nature of modern warfare. Wars are no longer fought at sites far removed from civilian life. Wars are no longer fought by chivalric men on horseback armed with spears and protected by shields.

Democracy

"Collateral damage" apologies suggest a lamentable lesson: the civilian noncombatants of enemy nations, including children, have less of a right to be spared violence and destruction than do the civilians of the attacking nations. While accidental killings are still considered criminal acts within the borders of one's own nation, "collateral damage" killings of the civilians of other nations are briefly mentioned in a tone of regret and then forgotten. Democratic leaders may preach that "all men are created equal," but their practice, the use of military force against enemy nations, which *always* results in the deaths of innocent people (including children), betrays the fact that they do not believe what they say. For leaders presume that it would be preferable to kill rather than convince soldiers and civilian inhabitants of the enemy nation that their leader is mistaken in the claims he has made. The use of destructive and deadly force against other nations reveals an implicit belief that "The Evil and Irrational Enemy" *and* all inhabitants of his land are beyond the reach of reason. Although leaders often say that they are waging war in the name of democratic values, in fact, their resort to deadly force belies such claims.

John Stuart Mill, in *On Liberty*, defends the free marketplace of ideas as necessary to the discovery of policies just and fair to all. The marketplace of ideas presumably allows people eventually to arrive at the truth, since criticism of currently prevalent views is always possible. In this way, formerly popular views, for example, regarding the moral permissibility of slavery and the legal possession of wives by their husbands, have been rejected after due consideration of much trenchant criticism. The marketplace of ideas requires an input of ideas, and this source derives from individual thinkers, who must be provided with the opportunity to voice opinions so that their merits and deficiencies can be assessed by all. We may find some views offensive, but in order to ascertain what is wrong with those opinions, we must permit them to be aired. Mill and those of his ilk insist that people are themselves capable of sifting the wheat from the chaff in the thresher of ideas. In order to adjudicate the claims made by the disputants, they must be permitted not only to speak their views, but also to hear what others claim to be true.

In a democratic nation, people elect their leaders and legislators. The laws are proposed by delegates and approved by the people. Many different interests compete and, ultimately, out of the disagreement emerges a winner, the

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majority opinion. The fundamental presupposition of democracy is that people are capable and desirous of ascertaining the truth. The fundamental value of democracy is freedom, freedom of thought, action and speech. Speech is the *sine qua non* of belief revision. The use of deadly force against any human being is decidedly undemocratic, for it annihilates the possibility of speech.

Human beings are fallible, and the mechanism by which democracy deals with this fundamental fact is the court of law, where both sides are given the right to be heard. Those accused of harming a fellow citizen or breaking the law in some other way are brought before a jury of peers and judged. Once the evidence has been weighed, a judgment is then made. But the burden of proof lies with the prosecution. The only thing worse than to deprive an innocent person of freedom would be to deprive him or her of life. "Vigilante justice" is undemocratic because it involves a refusal to articulate the grievances at issue and to permit one's peers to assess the available evidence. In all conflicts, both sides claim to be right and that their adversaries are wrong. One of the two parties must be mistaken. "Vigilante justice" is illegal because in punishing another person without trial, even if he be guilty of a crime, one undermines the democratic basis of the legal system. Vigilante killings of allegedly just retribution prevent the accused from defending him- or herself and invert the burden of proof. The victim is presumed guilty until proven innocent.

In international conflicts, no less than in courts of law, both sides claim to be right. Thus, military intervention can quite plausibly be analogized to vigilante violence. In fact, military attacks upon nations are far worse than vigilante violence, because the victims are, in many cases, not even candidates for guilt. Most contemporary just war theorists maintain that agents who are doing what they would have been doing anyway, were there no war, are immune from attack. In *The Ethics of War and Peace*, Paul Christopher observes that, in the Gulf War, "in addition to identifying command and control centers as targets, American planners also planned to destroy much of the support infrastructure of Baghdad: namely, sewage treatment plants, water purification facilities, and electrical power generators. The destruction of these facilities affected the civilian population and its health, safety, and living standards as much, and perhaps even more, than it affected the military. In this case it seems at least questionable whether the destruction of targets of these types is permitted under the condition of double effect." Even in heavily militarized nations, only a small percentage of the population participates in the armed forces.

Terrorism

In addition to rejecting "vigilante justice," representatives of stable nations also regularly condemn terrorist actions by extremist factions. The rationale for refusing to negotiate with terrorists is that *even if* they have been wronged, it is no less wrong to deploy violent means against innocent victims. Unfortunately, some of the most outspoken critics of factional terrorism seem utterly incognizant that their own destructive military policies are not so different from the crimes they decry. What, after all, is terrorism, if not the threat of the use of force against another party with the intention of achieving one's aims? From the perspective of the victims of terrorism, whether their killers be members of extremist groups or the professional soldiers of well-established nations matters not. The most nocent terrorists are those who act under the aegis of an institution such as the Third Reich.

A victim of terrorism is arbitrarily targeted, not for having committed any crime, but because he or she is unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. When nations undertake bombing campaigns, noncombatant civilians are subjected to the sound of bombs raining overhead and unnerving alarms in the vicinity. Even when these civilians believe that they are not being singled out, they know that bombs do not always land on their intended targets. In nations under attack, civilians wait huddled in fear, knowing full well that they may be the next to die. Consider, for example, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the NATO campaign against the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Political leaders and war supporters excuse men in uni-

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form for mistakes that result in the deaths of civilians, claiming that the soldiers did not intend to kill noncombatants. But the victims of a military bombing campaign are no less the victims of a terrorist act than are the persons unfortunate enough to have been on board an airplane hijacked by political fanatics. If it is always wrong to punish the innocent for the crimes of the guilty, then those killed through "collateral damage" are no less victims of immoral actions than are those arbitrarily killed by smaller, less stable terrorist factions.

For just war theorists, declaration by "legitimate authority" is the criterion distinguishing individual acts of murder or renegade acts of terrorism from justifiable instances of military violence. Here the conservatism of just war theory manifests itself. It is allegedly permissible for established nations to use deadly force in achieving their aims, but not smaller groups, though they can sometimes with great plausibility be construed as inchoate nations. Certainly political organizations represent the interests of a group of people no less than do the spokesmen for established nations. In reality, the nations for which people kill and die are temporal and transitory. People find themselves in nations, which they assume to be stable, persistent things, but it is clear from even a cursory consideration of history that they are not. The nations of today are not the same as those in existence only fifty years ago, much less five hundred years ago.

If moral persons are defined as beings in possession of sentience, intelligence, and consciousness, then nations, lacking all of these properties, are not moral persons and therefore, do not possess rights. A "right" is a moral concept and as such applies only to moral persons. Nations are formed by the association of consenting persons into groups. Accordingly, there is no principled distinction between nations and smaller subgroups, which can be viewed as "proto-nations" comprising people bound by certain interests and concerns. The distinction between violent intervention undertaken by smaller groups and those undertaken by military institutions cannot be made out in any morally significant way.

By deploying deadly force against the people of other countries, national leaders display their belief that recourse to force is morally permissible. Political leaders invariably invoke "just war" rhetoric in defending such decisions to wage war. They insist that war is not merely permissible but obligatory, whenever the cause is just and proportional and all pacific proposals have proven infeasible. But terrorist factions are often morally driven and claim to have been denied any legal avenue through which to express their grievances. Some terrorist groups foment against oppressive and inegalitarian regimes denying rights to the minority inhabitants of the land. In the end, all parties who offer reasons for their acts of violence offer moral reasons. The leaders of first world nations hypocritically decry terrorist acts by minority factions, while simultaneously providing them with a role model counterproductive to the abolition of terrorism in the modern world. Each bombing campaign is a graphic display of how force can be used to achieve one's own aims.

Moral Responsibility

Military campaigns against nations led by criminals convey an odd lesson regarding moral responsibility and criminal justice, a lesson that contradicts the burden of proof requirement governing our legal proceedings within society. In civil society, we place the burden of proof upon the prosecution because we recognize that the false conviction and punishment of an innocent person would constitute a travesty of justice. The law is commonly thought to reflect, albeit imperfectly, morality, but in cases where an innocent person is falsely convicted and executed, the putative institution of justice itself perpetrates gross injustice. So we are willing to err to the side of caution, insisting that all people are innocent until *proven* guilty, even though some offenders may be acquitted and roam at large. But we accept what we consider to be the lesser of two evils. In stark contrast, leaders who initiate bombing campaigns against enemy nations consider it permissible to punish (through terrorism) or even terminate innocent lives for the crimes of their leader.

In other words, moral responsibility is construed in a strange way when it comes to na-

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tions. For example, in his speech on January 16, 1991, then-president George Bush in effect proclaimed that, in order to avoid attack, the Iraqi people would have to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw his troops from Kuwait: "It is my hope that somehow the Iraqi people can, even now, convince their dictator that he must lay down his arms, leave Kuwait, and let Iraq itself rejoin the family of peace-loving nations." In general, we hold persons accountable only for actions that they voluntarily intend and execute. Yet the possibility of a "just war" in the modern world presumes that it is perfectly acceptable to hold civilians accountable for their leader's crimes.

THE ERRONEOUS ascription of moral responsibility to civilians is seldom mentioned in discourse about war. It is perhaps often thought that when a people freely selects its leaders, the citizens themselves bear at least some responsibility for their government's mistakes. Unfortunately, some leaders are dictators. Moreover, although many people assume that democratically determined leaders are obviously "legitimate," leaders are never elected unanimously in democratic nations. When a leader wins by majority vote, the minority selected someone else altogether. And so the question arises again: how can it be morally acceptable to punish, terrorize, or even kill people for their leader's crimes if they never selected the leader, or even tried to prevent him from becoming their leader?

One might retort that since citizens share the benefits of their society, they should share its burdens, some of the worst of which are incurred during wartime. But an analogous argument would seem to apply no less to the parent-child relation. It seems ludicrous to suppose that *because* a child benefits from being a part of a family (for example, by provision of food and shelter), the child should be held responsible for the crimes of its parents. Of course, if one can in good conscience hold a child responsible for its parents' crimes, then one will also be able to hold innocent citizens responsible for their leaders' abominations.

Force and Judgments

Throughout history, soldiers have been honored and praised for carrying out missions that terminate the lives of their fellow human beings. But no stable international tribunal exists for assessment of the alleged crimes against humanity ordered by national leaders. Accordingly, many people continue to condone the use of military means, pointing to the lack of any international analog to the court systems found within democratic societies. However, the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals were analogous to the legal system within civil society. It is obviously possible for international tribunals to render judgments upon the activities of egregious political criminals. In fact, it is plausibly none other than the nearly continuous use of military force by powerful nations that prevents any strides from being made toward the establishment of an effective international legal system. Were such a system implemented by representatives of mutually self-interested nations, then measures that decrease rather than increase the domestic political power of criminal leaders could be taken. No nation is a political island, for all depend upon imports and exports. A leader truly spurned by the international community (some members of which have armed criminals with their deadly weapons) could not remain in power for long.

Scenarios such as that sketched at the opening of this essay are neither ineluctable nor acceptable. On the contrary, to terrorize, assault, and even execute without trial the inhabitants of a land governed by a criminal is to indulge in an inexcusable act of myopic tyranny. Despotism is no less despicable in the name of a nation than for a leader. Least of all can despotic military destruction be coherently defended in the name of democracy. The true spirit of democracy will prevail only when the inhabitants of other nations are treated as fellow citizens of the world community, as rational beings capable and desirous of learning the truth. ●

LAURIE CALHOUN is the author of *Philosophy Unmasked: A Skeptic's Critique*.

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Michael Walzer Responds

I AM ONLY one of the just war theorists whose work Laurie Calhoun criticizes, but because I am the local one, it seems right that I respond in *Dissent*. She and I have an old disagreement, and I am not sure that she adds much to the argument, or that I can; but the argument is worth rehearsing, as it will never be definitively resolved. I will respond on three points, leaving the most familiar, and still the most important, point for last.

1. *Just war rhetoric* Calhoun insists again and again that the language of just war theory can be used to justify or rationalize all sorts of behavior that we ought to condemn. She is right, of course, but this is true of all moral language, including her own. We don't have to give up on compassion because George W. Bush calls his conservatism "compassionate"—even though it's clearly true that the word can be used as he has used it. Language is like that. The fact that talk of friendship is often a mask for betrayal doesn't mean that friendship isn't a meaningful moral category. The case is the same for just war. I was surprised to see Calhoun quoting with approval Paul Christopher's critique of American bombing policy in the Gulf War. The critique is made explicitly in just war terms. (I made a similar critique in the introduction to the second edition of *Just and Unjust Wars*.) Indeed, it's hard to see how the bombing of infrastructural targets could be criticized without invoking the idea of noncombatant immunity. At the same time, Saddam Hussein's propagandists also invoked that idea, as they could obviously invoke Calhoun's ideas, to defend the regime against attack, indeed, against any coercive response at all to its invasion of Kuwait. The bad guys use the same theoretical language as the good guys. That's an argument for critical use, not for no use.

2. *The domestic analogy* Another theme of Calhoun's piece is that there is essentially no difference between international and domestic society. She seems to believe that we can and should apply the legal standards of a liberal democracy across all political boundaries. Before a soldier can shoot his gun, he has to read all possible victims their *Miranda* rights. It isn't an entirely crazy idea: if soldiers don't do that, how can they avoid killing or injuring or frightening innocent people? In fact, of course, they can't avoid doing that—sometimes. Just war theory is an effort to set limits on the injuries inflicted on innocent people; no just war theorist that I know of even pretends to overcome the injustices that are an intimate part of warfare itself. In my own book, I write first about "the crime of war," and only after that do I argue for the relevance of justice to the decision to go to war, and then to all the further decisions about how to fight. Words like justice and innocence do not have the same meaning in international society as they have in domestic law. The dangers of international society are wholly different from those of domestic society, and there are no police to call in when danger looms. There is no global regime of justice, and one can't call such a regime into existence by wishing for it. (In fact, it might be necessary to fight for it.)

3. *Pacifism* Calhoun's argument about "collateral damage" is really an argument against war itself. She doesn't quite say that, but it is pretty clear, and she also doesn't deny it. She sets the moral standards for warfare so high that they can never be met. But she doesn't go on to do what I think she has a moral obligation to do (and can still do in her reply to this comment): tell us how she would deal with criminal regimes. How would she respond to military aggression? How would she respond to domestic massacre and ethnic cleansing? Consider a particular case, which has been discussed enough over the years so that all of us know something about it: the killing fields of Cambodia, the policy of mass murder conceived and carried out by the Pol Pot regime. The killing fields were shut down by the Vietnamese, who invaded Cambodia, overthrew Pol Pot, and occupied much of the country. The invasion required fighting, and I am certain that in the course of the fighting considerable "collateral damage" was inflicted. Just war theory provides criteria by which to judge each military action that injured civilians. I assume that

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we would criticize some and defend others. But surely the invasion itself was justified. Based on her argument here, however, Calhoun would have to deny the justification, given any "collateral damage" at all. But would she have allowed the killing to go on? How can she read the accounts published by survivors in the years since and not conclude that it was necessary to fight against the Khmer Rouge? But she doesn't seem to live in a world where such necessities exist. Her last sentence suggests what she would do and all that she can justify doing: she would wait until we are all "fellow citizens of the world community." Then she would dial 911. ●

MICHAEL WALZER is a co-editor of *Dissent* and a political philosopher.

Laurie Calhoun Replies

LANGUAGE IS multiply interpretable, as Walzer correctly observes. However, the *primary* uses of just war theory have been propagandistic and its consequences catastrophic. While references to "compassionate conservatism" are often disingenuous, they do not, as do allusions to "just war," lead directly to mass murder.

Although theorists such as Walzer care a lot about *jus in bello*, the people who wage wars appear to be *realists*, who deny the relevance of morality to the conduct of war. "All's fair in ...war" is a *cliché* for a reason. Consider the high incidence throughout history of rape by soldiers at war. And how might one better explain the rampant prevaricatory practices of U.S. leaders during Vietnam? Or the control of the media by the U.S. Department of Defense and their surreal depiction of the Gulf War as a bloodless sporting event? Although the devastating effects upon civilian populations of landmines have been amply documented, the United States, Russia, and China refuse to sign the Ottawa treaty. The Christopher citation to which Walzer alludes illustrates that a leader needs only to label his enemy "Hitler" in order to gain popular support for a ghastly campaign against "Hitler's" nation. The evidence is overwhelming that wars are waged and orchestrated by strategists who use just war theory for retrospective rationalizations of what would be crimes during peacetime.

To Walzer's claim that I am morally obliged to explain how to deal with mass murderers, I reply, first, that just war theory specifies conditions upon not the *obligatory* but the *permissible* execution of war. Second, in placing the problem of the existence of evil upon the shoulders of the war opponent, the just war theorist ironically blames her precisely where just war theory has been "abused." But if people rejected the just war paradigm, then mass murder by groups would never be committed. Ordinary people do not back "just homicide." We should reject just war theory because its use has led to untold pain, misery, destruction, and death.

To my claim that bombing campaigns are no less wrong than the use of terroristic and deadly force by smaller factions against innocent people, Walzer responds that there is justice, and then there is justice. Walzer is not a relativist; rather, he appears to embrace utilitarianism, according to which individual acts of apparently impermissible execution prove to be permissible, when viewed in the grander scheme of things. But history makes it clear that deadly force does not save lives: even less does it maximize utility. Military campaigns by powerful nations breed violence by generating new victims who interpret themselves as unjustly harmed and often seek revenge; providing a negative role model for smaller nations and informal factions (and individual people), thus increasing the incidence of terrorism and perpetuating a "culture of killing"; directly effecting the proliferation and dissemination of weapons; and thwarting progress toward the establishment of an effective international tribunal for the prosecution of criminal leaders.

I have no solution to the problem of the existence of evil, but I do have one proposal for its diminution: that the exportation of weapons be halted immediately. ●

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Utopianism, Human Nature, and the Left

Ken Brociner

Is there such a thing as a universally shared human nature? And if there is, is it essentially benevolent, malevolent, or some mixture of the two? Moral and political philosophers have debated these questions for centuries. In recent years, with the collapse of communism and the disarray of socialist ideology, the debate has lost much of its intensity. Capitalism now reigns supreme; its philosophical assumptions, including its rather grim view of human nature, go largely unquestioned.

On the left, however, the debate is far from over. For example, the bio-ethicist Peter Singer, in his recent book, *A Darwinian Left*, has argued that leftists should no longer "deny the existence of a human nature, nor insist that human nature is inherently good, nor that it is infinitely malleable." According to Singer, if the left is to stand any chance of achieving its historic goals, it must adopt a more realistic view of the patterns of human behavior.

At the same time, other left intellectuals have diagnosed the problem in a diametrically opposite way. Their complaint is that the left has become too "realistic" and in the process has betrayed the utopian vision that once defined what it meant to be on and of the left. Two books, published within weeks of each other in 1999, provide clear examples. Both Daniel Singer's *Whose Millennium?* and Russell Jacoby's *The End of Utopia* argue that the absence of a utopian vision in contemporary political discourse has so altered the ideological terrain as to make it all but inevitable that liberal and left governments throughout the world would drift toward the center. And of even greater consequence, as they see it, the near wholesale abandonment of utopianism has caused the left itself to lose its political bearings.

Because these two books have been favorably reviewed by a number of journals on the left, their arguments have mostly gone unchallenged. One of my aims in this essay is to rectify this. I also intend to use some of the ideas developed in both books as points of departure for a larger discussion.

Let's first examine whether the left is guilty as charged. Has there been, since the end of the cold war, a near complete absence of left-wing utopianism? That all depends on what we mean by "utopia." In their books, both authors suggest fairly similar notions of a utopian society. In Jacoby's case, one has to read between the lines a bit. That's because he never goes beyond calling for "a sense that the future could transcend the present" or "a radical idea for a new society." But based on his attacks on left intellectuals who would include a market of some sort in their ideal society, it's clear that Jacoby envisions an egalitarian socialist society without any markets.

Daniel Singer is somewhat more explicit in describing his ultimate vision. He argues that it is quite "easy to imagine a radically different socialist society emerging after a long period of transition." He goes on: "The main features of the alternative are obvious. . . . In a classless society, where the division of work has become purely functional, the superfluous state [will have] withered away."

Given these accounts of utopia, one would be hard-pressed to disagree with the claim that the left has, for the most part, stopped advocating a utopian vision. But if we allow for a more flexible understanding of utopia, one can easily disprove the main accusation. If we simply reformulate the question and ask whether the left has given up its historic goal of fundamentally changing the world, then the answer is clearly "No."

That a majority of leftists today believe that a market of some kind should be a feature of

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any future socialist society is beside the point. The fact is that most leftists have remained committed to far-reaching changes that would lead to a qualitatively different and substantially more egalitarian society.

What is most striking about these two books, however, is not their understanding of utopia; it is the assumptions both authors make about human nature. After I finished *The End of Utopia*, I was left scratching my head. Had I missed something? Or had I really just read a 224-page book about the need to revive the utopian vision—in which the author never, not even in passing, mentions the issue of human nature? Given that we were in the final year of the bloodiest century in all of recorded history, one would think that someone who was arguing on behalf of utopianism would at least raise the issue. Jacoby apparently assumes that it is so obvious that human nature is compatible with his vision of utopia that it doesn't even merit discussion.

Unlike Jacoby, Daniel Singer does address human nature, though only belatedly and superficially. In fact, it is only on page 269 of his 279-page book that Singer turns his attention to what most people would immediately see as the obvious stumbling block on the way to a utopian socialist society.

> Finally, we must deal with the argument that ideologists for the establishment use, when all else has failed, to prove that our project to reshape society is foolishly and bloodily utopian . . . that it rests on an overoptimistic assessment of human nature. . . . We, on the contrary, look at people and society in a historical perspective. They are neither sinners nor saints, neither noble savages nor greedy monsters. They are the product of circumstances.

At first glance, this may sound reasonable enough, especially to leftists. Upon closer inspection, however, there is something painfully absent here—namely, any degree of hesitation or uncertainty. Singer seems to have no doubt that under the proper circumstances, people would be capable of the kind of altruism needed to sustain his vision of utopia. In his thought-provoking essay "Socialist Hope in the Shadow of Catastrophe," Norman Geras passionately urges socialists to approach the issue of human nature with more caution and respect. Pointing to the Holocaust and the twentieth century's myriad other atrocities, Geras suggests that the human capacity for cruelty and evil should, by any reasonable account, at least call into question the standard socialist assumptions about human nature.

> A shadow stretches across the vision at the heart of the socialist project. . . . Democrats, liberals, and socialists of the last century would not have anticipated the horrifying and, as it has now proved, endless killing grounds of this one. . . . Human beings would not have been open, open so long and so geographically universally—and not only open, but so very available— . . . to the benefits of power and privilege, if these things did not meet any impulse in their makeup.

Wise words indeed. Unfortunately, Jacoby ignored the issue altogether, while Singer treated it all too glibly. Perhaps even more noteworthy is the fact that the reviewers of these books in the left press haven't even noticed.

Of course, there have been many serious discussions about human nature by left intellectuals. For example, Noam Chomsky, in his essay "Language Development, Human Intelligence, and Social Organization," wrote,

> Without bonds of solidarity, sympathy, and concern for others, a socialist society is unthinkable. We may only hope that human nature is so constituted that these elements of our essential nature may flourish and enrich our lives, once the social conditions that suppress them are overcome. Socialists are committed to the belief that we are not condemned to live in a society based on greed, envy and hate. I know of no way to prove that they are right, but there are also no grounds for the common belief that they must be wrong.

Few on the left would disagree with Chomsky's opinion that "we are not condemned to live in a society based on greed, envy, and hate." But that is quite a different matter than whether human beings are potentially so altruistic as to be able to build and sustain an egalitarian socialist society. In implicitly arguing that such

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a potential does exist, Chomsky has referred to the early Israeli kibbutzim and the 1936 revolution in Spain. In Chomsky's words, the kibbutzim represented "successful" examples of "functioning libertarian socialist institutions," while the Spanish Revolution was a "quite successful" anarchist revolution.

Without getting into a lengthy discussion of these two fascinating and inspiring social/political experiments, a couple of points should be made. First, neither experiment survived long enough to pass the test of time. In the case of the Spanish Revolution, military repression brought a quick and tragic end. The Israeli kibbutzim, while still in existence today, have moved so far from their original utopian socialist values that, if anything, they feed the counter-argument—that human nature is not capable of sustaining a socialist society over the long haul.

The second point is that both the anarchist collectives in Spain and the Israeli kibbutzim were self-selecting institutions. Only those people who were so inclined joined them. They offer limited evidence that human beings in general are capable of living so altruistically.

The scientific debate about the nature of human nature has also stimulated some serious treatments of the issue by left intellectuals. Since the mid-1970s, this debate has revolved around the arguments of E. O. Wilson and other leading advocates in the field of sociobiology. According to their views, there is now hard scientific evidence to support the belief that many aspects of human behavior are biologically determined.

The most visible opposition to sociobiology has come from scientists on the political left. Typical of their position is the following argument by Richard Lewontin and his collaborators in *Not In Our Genes*: "Up to the present time no one has been able to relate any aspect of human social behavior to any particular gene or set of genes. . . . Thus, all statements about the genetic basis of human social traits are necessarily purely speculative."

Assuming that the first part of this statement is correct—there is no proven correlation between specific genes and social behavior—where does that leave us? Instead of dismissing as mere "speculation" the idea that, say, violence or greed might be innate behavioral traits (co-existing, perhaps, alongside such positive traits as generosity and social solidarity), it seems to me that we need to take a more cautious approach. For surely the circumstantial evidence (an objective reading of the totality of human history) is so overwhelming that the burden of proof falls on those who reject the proposition that there are biological tendencies toward any number of negative characteristics.

THIS IS NOT to say that progressive social/political arrangements cannot minimize these tendencies. Barbara Ehrenreich, in her book *Blood Rites*, quotes the biologist Richard Dawkins to this effect: "It is perfectly possible to hold that genes exert a statistical influence on human behavior while at the same believing that this influence can be modified, overridden, or reversed by other influences."

But can these "other influences" so completely override our apparent tendencies toward negative behavior as to make possible the creation of what Che Guevera called the "New Socialist Man"? Unfortunately, the question is more than a little problematic. In recent years, two impressive, left-leaning studies have arrived at similar and similarly depressing conclusions.

William McCord, in his *Voyages To Utopia*, analyzed a wide variety of experiments in building "the ideal society." He looked at rural communes and religious societies, as well as at communist, social democratic, and capitalist nations. Among McCord's primary observations was a firm warning against "an overestimation of humankind's natural capacities." Similarly, Edward K. Spann, in his *Brotherly Tomorrows, Movements for a Cooperative Society in America, 1820-1920,* reluctantly concluded that "every movement eventually failed. . . . The model communities and colonies of the communitarians failed largely because of internal defects. . . .The national movements were no more successful. . . . These failures dashed all but the most stubbornly optimistic views of human nature."

As a product of the New Left and the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I would very much like to hold onto the intense idealism of my youth. And the fact is that de-

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spite all my disillusionment over the years, I still consider myself a socialist. I haven't given up on the possibility that human beings might somehow one day construct a truly egalitarian society/world. However, I am sad to say that my worldview has evolved to the point where I now consider the likelihood of this ever occurring to be rather slim. I suppose I'd call myself a "skeptical socialist."

Nevertheless, socialism remains a moral imperative for painfully obvious reasons. In a world with such obscene disparities of wealth between nations and peoples, we desperately need a new ethos, based upon the fulfillment of human needs and social equality, rather than on the pursuit of private profit. But an objective, open-minded evaluation of the historical record should lead us to a position of skepticism as to whether or not we humans are really capable of such a grand achievement.

Yet even today, after all that has happened over the last one hundred years (not to mention the horrors of preceding centuries), too many left intellectuals dogmatically claim that the *only* obstacles to a socialist utopia are the political, economic, and cultural institutions that prevail throughout the world. They utterly dismiss the possibility that the limitations of human nature itself might also be factors. For anyone who still clings to this perspective, the words of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin should be carefully considered: "This seems to me a piece of metaphysical optimism for which there is no evidence in historical experience." In his essay "The Bent Twig," Berlin wrote, "Some thinkers of the Enlightenment were optimistic, some less hopeful. Voltaire and Rousseau were equally clear about the very different worlds they wished to see, but wondered gloomily whether human folly and vice would ever permit their realization."

But even if such pessimism is warranted—even if it is unlikely that we will ever live in the kind of world we would wish to see—that does not mean we can't live in a world that is far more decent and just than the world we currently inhabit. Adopting a more skeptical view of human nature while holding on to most of our larger hopes and long-term visions for the future need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, doing so would provide us with a more accurate roadmap for the future—and thus make the realization of our goals that much more likely. ●

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The Pen and the Paving-Stone

It is often said that force is no argument. That, however, entirely depends on what one wants to prove. . . . It was a fatal day when the public discovered that the pen is mightier than the paving-stone.

-Oscar Wilde

Kristian Williams

IN THE LAST year, the globalization of capital has been pushed to the front of public debate, largely as a result of the emerging alliance between labor unions and environmentalists. This coalition has shown its strength, first in Seattle, opposing the World Trade Organization (WTO), and then in Washington, D.C., demonstrating against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. It has been characterized not only by its broadly anticapitalist goals, but also by its use of direct action tactics. In each case, liberal writers have complained that such tactics fall outside the established channels for effecting political change, and are thus unacceptable by the standards of a democratic society.

I want to weigh the practical value of di-

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rect action against the normative force of this liberal view and, more specifically, consider the relation between left politics and the liberal conception of deliberative democracy. By drawing attention to certain theoretical mistakes about the role of public deliberation and the nature of our social institutions, I hope to show direct action to be both a practical and legitimate tool for promoting social change.

Clearly, there is a role for persuasion and debate in gaining public support and in making strategic decisions in the pursuit of radical aims. But my focus here is on the relationship between the institutions that control our society and the people who would force those institutions to change. My claim is that because liberalism misunderstands the nature of inequality, its prescribed practices fall short of what is necessary to produce meaningful change.

The Liberal Approach

Most liberal writers give public discourse a central place in their theories of democracy, seeking to ground political decisions in reason while preserving the sense of democratic legitimacy. A useful example of this approach can be found in Thomas Christiano's book *The Rule of the Many*, where he argues that the proper function of interest groups is to aid in deliberation. It is the job of unions, women's groups, neighborhood associations, industrial councils, and civil rights organizations to research the interests of the people they represent, debate and cooperate with other organizations, and provide information (including information on the views of their members) to legislators and administrators.

Christiano bases this idea on a two-stage theory of democratic development. First comes a period of warring factions, each one trying to seize total control but unable to do so. During this period, the primary function of an interest group is to seek power and pressure the others to cede to its demands. When it becomes apparent that no one faction is powerful enough to establish permanent dominion, the society enters a second stage, characterized by "bounded conflict in which individuals do not agree on everything . . . see that they have conflicts of interest but . . . also have an allegiance to the underlying principles of democracy." At this point, the primary function of interest groups is deliberative; they exist to advocate their position, ideally with the support of rational arguments.

Christiano places American society in the second stage of development. He assumes a general commitment to democratic principles and seems not to notice that power—especially economic power—is gained undemocratically, used unaccountably, and concentrated in very few hands. It may yet be true that "most" people are committed to democratic ideals, but what does that matter if those with power are not so committed, or if the institutions that shape our society are profoundly undemocratic?

In our current circumstances, there can be no question that certain groups of people dominate both the political and economic spheres. But, with little consideration of the real effects of inequality, liberals insist that interest groups rely mainly on the strength of their arguments to advance their aims. More radical approaches are thereby cast out of bounds, either ignored by liberal theorists or decried as antidemocratic. So, many of these theorists are happy to align themselves with the underdog, but only so long as the demands of solidarity do not extend beyond participation in a reasoned debate. They become uncomfortable, even hostile, when those excluded from the corridors of power stop talking and begin rudely to elbow their way into the decision-making process, insisting that they will not allow it to continue without them.

Power and Reason

Christiano and his friends misunderstand the role of debate in our society, assuming much too close a link between the exercise of reason and the exercise of power. The fact that debate occurs says almost nothing about its real effect or its relation to policy. Debate can be used as a smoke screen, giving the impression of an open and democratic process while allowing the same entrenched forces to make decisions behind the scenes. Properly staged, debate often serves to mask the real reasons a policy is adopted and the real interests it serves.

A clear example of such distortion can be drawn from an earlier free trade battle—the struggle over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Amy Gutmann and Den-

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nis Thompson seem to have fallen for a rhetorical shell game when they write in *Democracy and Disagreement*, "The disagreement over NAFTA's effect on vulnerable workers in the United States and Mexico, democratic development in Mexico, and the environment took the same form: consensus on the moral values and conflict about whether NAFTA would serve them." The evidence they offer for this bizarre claim consists entirely of quotations from the congressional debate. While it may well be true that the debate in Congress centered on which policy would best protect workers and the environment, these were clearly not the interests motivating the legislation.

THE REAL conflict surrounding NAFTA, the fight behind the debate, pitted those concerned about workers and the environment against large multinational corporations eager to open new markets and make more money. Activists saw NAFTA as a direct threat to the public's ability to control powerful companies, and therefore also as a threat to the well-being of working people and the health of the environment. Had any genuine debate occurred, it would have focused on establishing the value of labor rights and environmental protection vis-à-vis the opportunity to increase corporate profits—since that's what was at stake—not on an empirical dispute about how best to address mutual concerns about economic justice and ecology. Instead, Congress used the debates to direct attention away from the issues at hand and to hide the motives behind the legislation. It would obviously not do to have elected representatives publicly announce that corporate profits were priority one. But the outcome was unaffected by the debate itself; it was determined by institutional and class interests never discussed on the floor of Congress.

The idea that NAFTA's adoption was simply a misguided attempt to implement agreed-upon ends can only be a piece of liberal mythology. The terms of the debate in Congress reflect the need of elected officials to speak to the interests of their constituencies. But the outcome of the dispute reveals the limits of that need, given existing social inequalities. The liberal account doesn't just misunderstand the role of interest groups; it is also confused about the nature of the institutions such groups seek to influence. Standard accounts of representative government, including liberal accounts, recognize that both the representatives and the state have interests distinct from, and potentially in conflict with, those of the populace. But theorists of deliberation don't seem to be paying attention.

Individually, each representative will have an interest in retaining a position and in securing influence within the legislature. This may require deference to the interests and preferences of his or her constituency (at least, of the voting constituency). But it will also require that the representative retain sources of funding, stay on good terms with the party leadership, maintain decent relations with other legislators of both parties, and preserve a favorable image in the media. Given the relative infrequency of elections, and the absence of any recall mechanism, other considerations will frequently outweigh the concerns of voters. Political survival depends on it.

Furthermore, the state has an institutional interest in preserving and expanding its control over society. It seeks constantly to reproduce its structures and to push its power beyond the established limits. The state concedes nothing without demand, least of all the right to influence its proceedings. And, of course, we ought not overlook the fact that those in important government positions share the interests and perspective of a particular economic class.

The elected legislature is an institution subject to at least some public control; yet conflicts of interest persist, with the state and the legislators on one side and the general public on the other. Such conflicts are both more extensive and more readily apparent in institutions that are international in scope and less subject to public control of any sort—private corporations or global finance agencies like the WTO, IMF, and World Bank.

Deliberative theory offers a distorted view of the sort of exchange possible between those with power and those without it. The liberal standard of free and open debate is too easily misapplied, and then it obscures both the actual operations of undemocratic institutions

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and the means by which their power can be resisted.

What Democracy Looks Like

This is how social change occurs: people organize and act so as to raise the costs of a given policy, until those with power cannot afford (socially, financially, politically, or whatever) to maintain that policy. It is not the validity of the arguments or the strength of one's convictions, but the ability to make things difficult for those in power that counts. Change occurs not because it should (because it's rationally justifiable), but because the status quo has become too difficult to maintain. This fact is understated in liberal social theory, and the role of rational debate exaggerated. The liberal story has it that "both sides" receive a fair hearing, and then the policy that best serves the public's interest is chosen by the elected representatives; change occurs because new arguments come to light.

Of course, this idealized picture of deliberative democracy leaves out a great deal about the effects of social inequality and the real nature of power—that is, about the actual conditions in which political decisions are made. In a situation of unequal power, the arguments of the powerless routinely count for nothing. It was precisely this exclusion from real consideration that led to the Zapatista rebellion in the Mexican province of Chiapas on January 1, 1994—the day NAFTA went into effect—and that, nearly six years later, led tens of thousands of people not only to voice opposition to the WTO, but to disrupt its proceedings. Oftentimes, the only thing that allows for actual deliberation is an *interruption* of the usual means of social discourse. And this interruption will rarely be deliberative.

The notion that politics is mostly about reasons, arguments, and justifications for decisions—rather than about competing interests, conflict, and power—is a dangerous fantasy. It is dangerous, in part, because it would misdirect the attention and energy of those trying to effect change. Rather than organizing ordinary people (who generally lack real political influence), showing their numbers, presenting a threat, and raising the social costs of maintaining the status quo, liberal theory would advise activists to spend their time appealing to the rationality and benevolence of those with power. Highlighting the limited perspective of intellectuals, liberal theory offers a "think tank" model of democracy, where it is only the study of social problems and the crafting of persuasive arguments that brings us closer to change. The rest, it seems, is left to the wisdom of our representatives and the graciousness of our bureaucrats. Such an approach is poorly conceived. It does not reflect the reality of our nominally democratic representative government. And, in regard to the WTO, IMF, and World Bank, it is precisely the inability of public discourse to affect policy that made direct action necessary.

The liberal view would have more force in a genuinely democratic society, where individuals participate as equals in the decisions affecting their lives. But so long as there are professional decision makers with interests and motives distinct from those they represent, it will be necessary for people to organize and agitate for the changes they desire. At its best, this takes the form of the mass of excluded men and women taking back power that is rightfully their own—the essence of real democracy. ●

KRISTIAN WILLIAMS is a graduate student on leave from the philosophy department at Georgetown University. He thanks Henry Richardson and Emily-Jane Dawson for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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Highway to Nowhere

Salon, Slate, Feed, *and Internet Publishing*

Gina Neff

FOUR YEARS AGO, when I began interviewing people who work in New York's Internet industry, I was struck by an irony: even though their employers and clients were some of the largest media and technology conglomerates in the world, workers I spoke to told me that they loved being in "the freest medium around," in which the new technological revolution in "interactivity" would unleash a democratic spirit and crumble ignorance and tyranny. Hyperbole? Of course. But before the first rumblings of the bulls and initial public offerings in Silicon Alley, New York's young and hip Internet pioneers were broke and idealistic. Perhaps *because* nobody made much money back in those days, industry gatherings were more likely to end in conversations quoting Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault and Marshall McLuhan rather than stock prices. Still, even in the early days of Internet publishing, the talk of worker-owned startups changing the rules of the economy and the promise of information setting us all free seemed charmingly quixotic.

Those early fantasies of communitarian utopia were based on the idea that mouse clicks differ somehow from those of a remote control. Passively receiving information, well, that's just oh-so-television! Users themselves—not professional media hacks—were to build the Internet and its communities with their own involvement, time, and passions. The network and the Web became new metaphors for social organization: we're nodes linked together by the choice and freedom to connect with like-minded others. Leaving aside the fact that there were (and still are) those who are left out, disconnected, and not plugged in, this comunitarian image of the Internet so prevailed that a venture capitalist like Esther Dyson could rave about the "powerful enabling technology fostering the development of communities."

Unfortunately, this free medium is quite expensive. Perhaps it was true for a while that anybody could just "throw something up" on the Web and people would read it, but now the vehicle that seemed perfect for spreading democracy and do-it-yourself broadsiding is actually increasing the concentration of media. This is a contentious statement, given the euphoria over Internet-organized protests, progressive Web sites, and wonders of nonprofit uses of Internet publishing. The merger of old and new media in the America Online (AOL) and Time Warner deal only amplified the dirge for Internet media independence begun by a chorus of commentators. Eric Alterman wrote in *IntellectualCapital.com*, a for-profit on-line bipartisan policy journal: "The great and painful irony of the explosion of new media during the past decade is that while it has falsely appeared to democratize media, it has actually cemented the power of the nine or so conglomerates that control most of the communications world. Given the price of both Internet technology and the 'content,' these new technologies can be leveraged only through enormous economies of scale." Startup costs now for professional Web publications are higher than those for their print counterparts. Online magazines spend more than 50 percent of their budgets on marketing, and hourly rather than daily or weekly updates mean higher editorial costs. A profusion of new Web sites makes it harder to get people's attention, so that only the ones with the fat advertising budgets can afford to stand out. Two of the magazines discussed below are losing millions a year —*Salon*, for example, spent more than $21 million last year and lost more than $13 million.

Big money on the Internet may have hit the

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political idealists hard, but what has actually beaten them is how people now use the Internet. Interactivity these days is more likely to be checking stock prices or bidding on *tchotchkes* on eBay than debating policy or discussing community. Although communitarian dreams have had their moment in the new economy, the libertarian ones are more enduring; on-line, it seems, we're all market-driven, click-happy Philistines with little time for thought or reflection. And who, really, can blame us? As twitchy and flashy as the Web has become, it's no wonder that the "stickiest" sites (a term used by the industry to indicate how long someone stays on a site) are those that emulate the eye-glazing effects of television.

More people are participating online, but unfortunately, what digital divide activists have won access to is not the *demos* they were fighting for. Internet users have become more diverse as the information superhighway has become little more than road signs and billboards. News and analysis have lost out to headlines, business, sports, and the weather, not to mention the more dubious distractions such as "100,000% return on your investment!" "You Can Have It All . . . FREE!!!" and "FEELIN' SEXY?" (or, judging from the guilty pleasures and procrastinations among my own Web site bookmarks, horoscopes, shopping, manners and advice columns, and other "women's" diversions).

According to the Pew Research Center for the Press and the People, Americans now are more likely to own a computer than to report having watched the news or a news program in the last day, but those who get their news on-line every day are even less likely than non-Internet users to read newspapers or watch the news. The plugged in are tuning out other media. They're also younger, richer, better educated, and more likely to be male (Three-quarters are under fifty, and half have family incomes of $50,000 or more). Fully one in four of those who get their news on-line daily admitted to making a stock trade in the last month. Is it any wonder that the most popular news, information, and entertainment sites (excluding AOL) are ZDnet.com and CNet.com? Both sites cover business news about technology companies and reviews of high-tech gadgets; their merger was announced over the summer.

Excluding pornography, few sectors of Internet content turn a profit, and the only successful content subscription services to date have been business sites, with TheStreet.com and the *Wall Street Journal Interactive* among the most successful. When people do log on for "news," the most popular category is weather, and the Weather Channel's Web site alone gets more hits a month (more than 7.5 million) than any single on-line newspaper or magazine in the country. When forecasts become the most important message (today's high: 10,037 with partial clouds clearing in active trading), hopes for the Internet as a new democratic medium seem all wet.

THAT'S NOT to say there isn't some interesting political and cultural criticism on the Web. But between "repurposed" articles from print publications and loops of wire feeds, between the personal essays and PR-driven book and movie reviews, thoughtful analysis gets crowded out despite the best attempts of the some of the largest and oldest magazines on-line, such as *Slate* (www.slate.msn.com), *Salon* (www.salon.com) and *Feed* (www.feedmag.com). In structure, *Slate* and *Salon* are more like traditional magazines, with features, columns, and short front-of-the-book snippets, whereas *Feed* is organized around one daily essay. All three publish original articles and have some of the best writing on-line as well as links to related information both within and outside of their Web sites. Content competes in a sped-up on-line economy, though, and this kind of writing—especially reporting—is too slow, too general, and too expensive for the demands of freshness, customization, and profitability made by the medium. Content-heavy sites have yet to figure out what their "business model" is to be: fewer than .02 percent of viewers click through to advertisers' sites, most subscription efforts have flopped, and selling the informa-

*This excludes American Online's proprietary news and entertainment channels to which only AOL subscribers have access , which both get more viewers per month than CNet and ZDNet.

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tion gathered about users and what they do on-line makes some folks squirm (and rightly so). In such a context, the scraps of smart writing that make it on-line seem more like niche marketing to the intellectual set.

Salon, founded by David Talbot, along with other *San Francisco Examiner* veterans, at least has pretensions to progressive coverage of politics and culture. Talbot described himself to the *Los Angeles Times* as "too much a '60s person" and as wanting his epitaph to read, " 'He made a cultural impact.' " Still, as editor of a publicly traded magazine, he has to answer to the same fickle cycles of the market, and when its stock value tumbled last spring. *Salon* was quick to ax 9 percent of its staff, including the founders of its "Mothers who Think" section, its media critic, and half of its full-time book review staff. As for *Salon*'s cultural impact with serious writing, one need look no further than its new design, which places its shopping section in one corner and headlines from a wire feed in another. The articles seem more about creating buzz than culture. When Dan Savage, a syndicated sex columnist, covered the Gary Bauer campaign during the Iowa caucus, he wrote hilariously of his plot to give Bauer the flu as revenge for his attacks on homosexuals. Perhaps the decision to run such a piece was journalistically questionable, but *Salon* got wide, if critical, coverage in the print press for it, as it did for breaking the story of Henry Hyde's own affair as he was probing into Monicagate. More telling of *Salon*'s reportorial priorities is in what its Washington bureau chief David Weir said to the *Boston Globe*, "There's no bad buzz. . . .We're not the gatekeepers of what should be published." Political coverage usually gets no further than Beltway antics, although the coverage from the Seattle protests last autumn was a notable exception. Still, this is the on-line home of Camille Paglia and David Horowitz, and Garrison Keillor's advice column, "Mr. Blue," comes off more moralistic than liberal.

Old-media journalists have delighted in *Salon*'s tit for tat with *Slate*, even though the rivalry has the vapid entertainment value of the bickering between a high school's yearbook and newspaper staffs. As part of the Microsoft network of content sites, *Slate* is not required to publicly share its financial information, although editor Michael Kinsley assured his readers that *Slate* is losing money less quickly than *Salon*'s $13 million-a-year burn rate. ("As a tiny division of a big company, *Slate* doesn't release exact figures, so you can believe me or not as you choose.") Kinsley's lack of humor toward his magazine's being bankrolled by Microsoft certainly doesn't breach journalistic ethics, but it doesn't keep the rest of us from feeling giddy *schadenfreude* at turns of bad news for them, as when *Slate* abandoned both its print and on-line subscription efforts.

Slate is certainly the smuggest of the Web 'zines—it's true that it has good writers and takes political coverage more seriously than either *Salon* or *Feed*—but its smarmy, politically agnostic tone is at times unbearable. Just look at the haughtiness of Judith Shulevitz's "Culturebox" critiques and Scott Shuger's scandalously politically incorrect summaries of the "Daily Papers," the same kind of summary of the morning papers he wrote when he worked for Naval intelligence. Blacks can afford good stereos but not computers was one of his editorial asides on a report on the digital divide. When *Slate* announced a new piece of technology allowing readers to personalize the site, Kinsley wrote, "Now, if you'll excuse us, we'll go back to trying to produce a bit of journalism worthy of all this swell technology." For all its technological bells and whistles *Slate*'s site is heavy on commentary and summary but light on actual reporting. Still, *Slate* had almost two million "unique visitors" a month (the on-line metric for measuring "traffic" to Web sites), which is a million more viewers than *Salon*, its closest competitor. (Both are tiny compared to the sixteen million visitors a month to AOL's news site, the most popular news site on the Internet.) Microsoft has seamlessly integrated *Slate* into MSN.com with a strip of links along the top of *Slate*'s pages to MSN's shopping, E-mail, and Web portal sites and links at the bottom to Microsoft's travel, auto shopping, chat sites, and such other MSN content as "When Cupid's Arrow Has Failed . . . ," "The Future of Office Romance: Should We Ban It or Let It Be?" and "Find and Compare Homes On-line." Although not as tacky or ethically questionable

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as the promotional advertorials *Slate* has run for the likes of Blue Nile diamonds—and the *New Republic*—taken as a whole, the magazine looks like a child lost in the middle of a shopping mall.

In contrast, *Feed* magazine is still a small "indy," complete with its own romantic Silicon Alley founders' story (New York apartment, money borrowed from family), barebones finances (claiming to have spent only $2 million in five years), and dreamy visionary (co-founder Steven Johnson was dubbed a "cultural critic with a poet's heart" in the *Village Voice*). Last summer, *Feed* announced its merger with *Wired* magazine's more-ironic-than-thou on-line daily, *Suck.com*, ending its independence as the oldest on-line magazine. In *Feed*'s short, snappy essays on cultural and social life, writers will quote from Terry Eagleton, talk about the feminist implications of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or debate biological determinism alongside musings on ad campaigns. Although the structure of its dailies can feel a little like a seven-hundred-word rant, *Feed* has managed to create some smart pieces in a pared-down format and strike a fine balance between fresh commentary and thoughtful reflection. The recently expanded special issues—including a fabulous one on cities—and occasional longer essays and interviews give the magazine as a whole a little more substance. In keeping with its new media intelligentsia street credibility, the coverage in *Feed* tends to stay cultural and high tech, although politics slip in from time to time. In a recent review of *Gig*, a book by *Word.com* editors Marisa Bowe and Sabin Streeter, along with John Bowe, Keith Gessen suggested a different preface for this nineties take on Studs Terkel's *Working*: "The machine, it seems, will suggest its own form of resistance. And if that's not political enough, if you need statistics and categories, sorry, that's not what we're about here in the New Media. If the price for ridding ourselves of the arrogant dogma of work-as-an-evil was losing, also, our political imagination, it was a high price indeed. But, I don't know. Maybe we had it coming."

Maybe we did indeed. Given a new medium for communication, we all paid the price of our political imagination. Just when the image of the Internet startup enterprise cowboy—ready to be his "own boss" (as an ad campaign's copy describes him), Palm Pilot and cell phone ready at the draw, firing flashing bits of code from java-fueled, late-night programming duels—became the image of the organization man, or rather, the anti-organization man, for a new economic revolution, we lost our claim on the Internet as a public space. Now that the Internet is so heavily capitalized with market thinking, all we have left to show for common space on-line is a handful of protest sites and the belief that somehow the medium is the message. In *Still Life in Real Time*, Richard Dienst compared the steam engine's aggregation and abstraction of labor in the industrial era to television's creation of value in viewers' leisure time in late capitalism: "We work at television, participating in the creation of value that appears to us in the form of images. . . . To perform this job for capitalism, television does not need to offer meaning or pleasure, just a structure of time and a mechanism for profit." Do the new media really differ? If we've helped to build community on-line, it's only so somebody else can cash in on it. The belief that the medium is so free that we are in control—clicking on what we want; clicking off what we don't—hides the fact that there are advertisers, editors, and demographers all counting those clicks, desperate to figure out some way to make money off of them. But hey, if the information is free for the taking, how can we resist? ●

Gina Neff is a student in the sociology program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

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Chechyna, 1995-6

©James Nachtwey/Courtesy of Phaidon Press

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Beyond the Sorrow and the Pity

I knew my pictures had a message, but what it was precisely I couldn't have said.
-Don McCullin, *Unreasonable Behaviour*

I knew that of all the gory and heart-wrenching scenes I had already photographed that morning, this dead baby was the image that would show the insane cruelty of the attack. . . . But the light sucked.
-Greg Marinovich and João Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*

Susie Linfield

JAMES NACHTWEY: TESTIMONY
An exhibition at the International Center of Photography, New York City, May 23-July 23, 2000

INFERNO
by James Nachtwey
Phaidon, 2000 480 pp $125

GROUND LEVEL:
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES NACHTWEY
Exhibition catalogue
Massachusetts College of Art, 1997

THE BANG-BANG CLUB:
SNAPSHOTS FROM A HIDDEN WAR
by Greg Marinovich and João Silva
Perseus, 2000 254 pp $26

In JAMES NACHTWEY'S photographs, it's a relief to come upon a squinting sniper in Bosnia or Chechnya, or Croatian mourners at a funeral, or even India's "untouchables" performing their grueling, backbreaking work. The subjects of these photographs may be bereaved, terrorized, exhausted—they may even be killers—but at least they stand upright, they look reasonably fed, they wear clothes, and they seem to exist within some kind of coherent community. This is far more than can be said for many of the people Nachtwey has photographed over the past decade: stunned, rag-covered Somalis and Sudanese holding their heads as they writhe on the ground and slowly starve to death; Rwandans hacked to pieces by their compatriots or expiring of cholera in refugee camps; grotesquely deformed, sore-encrusted Romanian orphans (Ceausescu's children, really) driven mad through abandonment or dying of AIDS. Welcome to the end of the twentieth century, to the post–cold war decade of the "peace dividend."

Nachtwey—whose massive, imposing book *Inferno* has recently been published, and whose work was on view at the International Center of Photography (ICP) this past summer—is, along with Susan Meiselas, Gilles Peress, Eugene Richards, and Sebastião Salgado, among the preeminent photojournalists working today. But unlike most others, he concentrates almost exclusively on wars and their aftermaths—he has said that he wanted to become a war photographer, not a photographer per se—and his work is perhaps the most widely distributed. He is a prominent member of the Magnum collective and has a highly prized contract with *Time* magazine, which allows him an unusual amount of freedom. ("James Nachtwey chooses what he wants to do," *Time*'s director of photography has said. "We trust his instincts.") He is a lightning rod for the current disputes over photojournalism—and therefore, too, over the nature of modern war and the humanitarian response to it. His work is fascinating and important not just in itself, but for what it reveals about the ways in which critics and journalists view both photojournalists and the events they witness.

Much of Nachtwey's work is almost impossible to look at. His gaze is unflinching—he has said there is no picture he would not take, or has ever regretted taking—and it requires, I think, a person as tough as he (or, alternately, entirely obtuse) to scrutinize, or even glance

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furtively, at many of his photos. Nachtwey's picture of a starving, naked Sudanese man—his thighs barely wider than our wrists, his white teeth jutting out, his bony back covered either with flies or sores as he crawls on the ground toward a feeding station—is a study in stripped-down humanity that will inevitably evoke, for many viewers, the barely living skeletons at Dachau or Belsen. (Like the camps at Dachau and Belsen, the famines in the Sudan and Somalia are man-made creations—the result of conscious policies and not, say, too much or too little rain.) A young Chechen bomb victim—he looks about eight—lies in a hospital bed, naked; we see his bare chest with its delicate, child's skin, his plump belly-button, his small penis, and then . . . the amputated stumps of his legs, each cut off at the upper thigh. A Rwandan Hutu suspected of "Tutsi sympathies" (whatever those are) has had his face and head carefully carved with a machete into deep, symmetrical gashes, one of which extends in a perfect arc from his mouth almost to his ear; he is photographed in profile, his eyes wide with alarm, his hand clutched to his neck. The point to remember (though comprehension may be more difficult) is this: human beings—creatures of reason and free choice—did these things to each other, did them purposely and with passionate conviction.

YET THOUGH Nachtwey's images are often intolerable, the charges of "war pornography" that have dogged him are specious. His photographs are extraordinarily sober, even disciplined; there is no exultation or cleverness here. Simultaneously complex and stark, Nachtwey's pictures are unburdened by extraneous detail: he shows us more than we can bear, but no more than we need to see. Indeed, Nachtwey is known for the perfection of his compositions—something that, oddly, he has been criticized for, as if craft were a moral shortcoming. Writing in the *Village Voice*, for instance, critic Richard B. Woodward castigated Nachtwey for "the troubling fact that the photographer took his time in framing and lighting the victims," and compared his work unfavorably with the "scrappy, often blurry pictures" Robert Capa took of the Spanish Civil War. Perhaps Nachtwey should intentionally muddy his photographs so that, like carefully "distressed" furniture, they can achieve the kind of shabby chic that critics (and home decorators) now seek out.

Rwanda, 1994

©James Nachtwey/Courtesy of Phaidon Press

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The beauty that seeps into some of Nachtwey's photographs *is* troubling, but it is not unethical; it forces us, though, to engage certain paradoxes. We are accustomed to images that demand nothing of us; Nachtwey's ask a lot, and therefore cause consternation. Take, for instance, his 1996 photograph of an Afghan woman mourning her brother in a Kabul cemetery. Her face and body are entirely hidden by her *burka*, which flows onto the parched, cracked ground as she kneels at the primitive tombstone; her head is bent forward; one hand reaches out to rest on the grave.

In this photo, meaning and appearance fight each other at every turn. Though the *burka* is a cruel (some would say grotesque) garment that imprisons its wearer behind a face-grill, the loveliness of its billowing pleats cannot be denied. Though grief is a harsh master, the woman's pose suggests a gentle humility that is very close to grace. Though the dryness of the stony earth and the pocked, misshapen graves tell us that this is a country where poverty and war have inextricably merged—over one million Afghans have died since 1979—a strange peacefulness pervades the photograph. In short, though everything we know about this scene bespeaks pain and devastation, their opposites are undeniably present, too. This suggests not that Nachtwey is a cold aesthete, but that horror and beauty cannot, perhaps, be as easily separated as some would like—and that those who believe they can untangle the two are probably already blind to both. Toward the end of World War II, the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz wrote that the scent of a blossoming tree (which in the poem also represents his writing pen) is "like an insult/ To suffering humanity." Yet the poem Milosz wrote about this brazen insult—about the blossoms, and the art, that dared survive the massacres—is itself a thing of beauty. Milosz could only make his point by undermining it; this may be true of Nachtwey, too.

Nevertheless, a type of aestheticization, a parsing of meaning, does emerge in Nachtwey's work, though it is not to be found in the photos themselves. At both his ICP show and in *Inferno*—which contains almost four hundred pictures—Nachtwey supplies us with little information beyond short captions that tell us the location, the date, and a very few facts. (Each geographic section is also preceded by a brief historical introduction.) Even worse, this information is strictly compartmentalized from the photographs: in the huge book the captions appear, in tiny type, at the very back; at the ICP, visitors were given a confusing booklet containing a map of the photos, each numbered, to be matched with an accompanying list of captions. Most people probably dispensed with this cumbersome method and therefore had little idea of what, specifically, they were looking at.

THIS IS NOT simply a stylistic problem. By segregating text and photos, Nachtwey undermines his self-proclaimed intention to promote understanding and inspire action—to help viewers of his work, as he writes in *Inferno*'s "Afterword," "translate their feelings into an articulate stance." Instead, he makes it far too possible for the information-deprived viewer to fall into an anguished yet impotent hopelessness: in the absence of knowledge, all starving people, all massacred people, all degraded, defeated, abject people begin to look sort of the same; even worse, there seems to be neither rhyme nor reason for their predicament and therefore, surely, no solutions to it. Perhaps Nachtwey thought his pictures would be more powerful—or closer to the abstract values of "real" art—if readers were not distracted by text. Or perhaps he wanted to—in the words of that old, erroneous expression—"let the pictures tell the story."

For whatever reason, he has made exactly the wrong choice. When Mark Rothko called a red-and-black painting "Red and Black," or when Cindy Sherman calls a self-portrait "Untitled," they invite the viewer to discover richer, more capacious meanings in their work by refusing to limit our imaginations. Photojournalism works in the opposite way: meaning—moral, political, aesthetic—is deepened through specificity. (A bombed-out Dresden and a bombed-out Hanoi might look the same, but their histories of destruction are radically different.) And photographs cannot, of course, tell us stories, for images are by their very nature non-narrative. The photograph contains no beginning, middle, and end—only a single mo-

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ment that once was "now," and now is "then."

This absence of narrative makes photographs malleable, the perfect repository for projections of all kinds; all photographs—and images of atrocity and war, regardless of how piercing, are no exception—are therefore liable to an infinite number of (mis)interpretations. (This may be why Adolf Hitler particularly liked the photograph as a propaganda tool. "The picture," he said, "clarifies everything immediately"— by which he meant, of course, simplifies.) John Berger has written that every photograph snatches a moment out of time—which is to say out of context, out of history, out of lived experience—thereby creating a shocked, and shocking, discontinuity that is itself a form of violence. To reconnect the photograph to human experience—the opposite of deconstruction—is, of course, a far larger project than simply supplying, or reading, captions. It requires, on the part of the viewer, the ability to think politically—to think, that is, about power, freedom, justice, equality, exploitation—rather than wallow in pity and guilt. It requires the ability to connect seemingly disparate events—events that occur in different places and even different time frames—in sometimes counterintuitive ways. It requires the ability to recognize that there are some problems that, for better or worse, cannot be solved by a Live Aid concert. It requires, most of all, a moral imagination: the ability to conceive of a world fundamentally different from the one we know.

These are precisely the abilities that contemporary Americans have lost. And surely it is not James Nachtwey's job—nor that of any photographer—to nurture this altered consciousness. Indeed, our reliance on images—so good at showing, so useless at explaining—is a major impediment to the emergence of a less fragmented, less sentimental, more thoughtful worldview. But Nachtwey, through presenting his photographs so "purely," abets the confusion he seeks to banish; he makes bewildered despair—or its partner, cheap cynicism—too easy. A good example of both attitudes can be found in critic Henry Allen, who, reviewing Nachtwey's work in the *New Yorker*, wrote oh-so-wearily of the "chaos and impossibility" of the countries Nachtwey has photographed and of the "gruesome hopelessness" he portrays; Allen charged that Nachtwey views his "wretched" subjects as "civilization's mutants" and suggested that the war photographer "perhaps . . . is a sniper of sorts, too."

The photojournalist as sniper—and as vulture, exploiter, leech, manipulator, and liar—has become a staple of postmodern photography criticism. The camera, we are told, equals the gun; the documentary photograph, we are informed, is at best a "fictive construct" and at worst a "discourse of control." Alas, the viewer is no better than the photographer, for the former's gaze precisely, indeed rather remarkably, reproduces the oppressive power relations that the latter seeks to expose. Naturally, then, moral purity resides in refusing to either take, or look at, such nasty pictures.

One can reject the irritating narcissism of this approach while recognizing that the recording of suffering *is* a thorny business—and not a particularly democratic one. In fact, the most talented and committed "conflict photographers" have always questioned both the morality of their craft and the toll it takes on them, though their answers bear little resemblance to the guilt-ridden, solipsistic hand-wringing that dominates so much contemporary criticism. Don McCullin, one of Britain's leading photojournalists in the 1960s and 1970s who photographed wars in the Congo, Biafra, Vietnam, and Lebanon, wrote of the price he paid for his immersion in catastrophe—and of the undeniable attraction that immersion held for him: "You cannot walk on the water of hunger, misery and death. You have to wade through to record them. . . . I felt I had seen so much horror that it was likely to destroy me. . . . But . . . I cannot do without the head-on collision with life I have when I am working." Robert Capa told of how, in England during World War II, he once put down his camera when challenged by an indignant, slightly wounded pilot who felt he was being exploited. Capa thought about the situation: "On the train to London, . . . I hated myself and my profession. This sort of photography was only for undertakers and I didn't like being one." But then he thought some more: "Next morning, after sleeping it over, I felt better. While shaving I had a conversation with myself about the incompatibility of being a re-

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porter and hanging onto a tender soul at the same time. . . . The pictures of the dead and wounded were the ones that would show people the real aspect of war, and I was glad I had taken that one roll before I turned soppy."

THE AUTHORS of *The Bang-Bang Club*, South African photojournalists Greg Marinovich and João Silva, reside squarely in the tradition of Capa and McCullin. Marinovich and Silva—along with their "club" colleagues Kevin Carter and Ken Oosterbroek—are white South Africans who cut their teeth and made their names covering the ferocious fighting in the black townships between supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and of the Inkatha Freedom Party in the turbulent transitional period of 1990-1994. The authors make clear that a dizzying confluence of factors motivated them, including a desire to record history in the making, the need to escape unhappy love affairs, competitive rivalry, a hatred of apartheid, and a craving for action. You could say these photographers were drawn to the violence-drenched townships because something singular, epochal, world-historic was happening there, and that would be true; you could say they were drawn to the townships because that's where the excitement, the juice, and the "powerhouse pictures" were to be found, and that would be true too.

The title of the book—the four were dubbed "bang-bang paparazzi" by a South African magazine—is both brash and ironic. Marinovich and Silva loved their work and believed, rightly, that it was important and necessary. But they also knew that they were feeding off the violence—the bang-bang—of their countrymen, and they sometimes feared there might be a payback. And there was. Marinovich was severely wounded, and Oosterbroek killed, as they covered a shootout in Thokoza township days before the 1994 elections; Carter committed suicide in July of that year, three months after winning the Pulitzer Prize. (Though the South Africans generally scorned foreign photographers as naïve dilettantes, they considered James Nachtwey an honorary "club" member, and he appears intermittently throughout the book. Nachtwey was with Marinovich and Oosterbroek at the shootout in Thokoza; his own phenomenal luck held, though a bullet whizzed through his hair.)

The Bang-Bang Club is a compelling, down-to-earth adventure narrative—quasi-personal, quasi-historic—but it poses many of the theoretical and moral questions that photography critics debate. At the beginning of the book, and of his career, Marinovich witnesses the lynching of a suspected ANC supporter (a member of the Pondo tribe) by pro-Inkatha Zulus. "The Zulus and I took off after him, a pack hunting its terrified prey," Marinovich writes. "After just a few dozen steps he went down. . . . My ears picked out the slithering, whispery sound of steel entering flesh, the solid thud of the heavy fighting sticks crushing the bone of his skull. These were sounds I had never heard before, but they made sickening sense." Marinovich does not try to stop the mob; the murder proceeds, and so does his work: "I was one of the circle of killers, shooting with a wide-angle lens just an arm's length away, much too close. I was horrified, screaming inside my head that this could not be happening. But I steadily checked light readings . . . I was as aware of what I was doing as a photographer as I was of the rich scent of fresh blood." Later, Marinovich will win a Pulitzer Prize for his photograph called "Human Torch"—this time it is ANC supporters who set a suspected enemy on fire, then plunge a machete into his blazing skull. (The bang-bang boys intuitively knew the difference between being neutral, which they weren't, and being accurate, which they were; thus, though they were staunch ANC supporters, they never hesitated to portray atrocities committed by their "own" side.)

The unofficial war these young photographers documented was chaotic, sadistic, devoid of glory. To their credit, the authors never retreated into nihilism. Still, the cruelty of the combatants is often shocking—and proof once again of the unsurprising fact that dehumanizing political systems tend to dehumanize, not ennoble, their victims. One day while driving in Thokoza, "João spotted a group of women chasing another, younger woman. She was bleeding from her head and losing ground fast. In seconds they had caught her, hacking at her with whatever weapons they had. . . . The low cries of pain from the woman on the dirt pavement were almost drowned out by the attackers' triumphant ululating. João was scared, con-

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fused. This was not the kind of war photography he had imagined himself doing—this was too weird, but he shot off frame after frame. . . . Just then a man walked into the right-hand side of his frame, patronizing the female killers with a broad smile. João instinctively . . . pressed the shutter." And there it is, the picture we see: the handsome man with the dazzling, even joyous, smile in the foreground, the female killers continuing their hard work behind him.

As members of the press and as whites, the photographers were in a privileged position vis-à-vis their subjects. This knowledge did not paralyze them, but they were forced to grow increasingly aware of it. In early 1994, a colleague, photographer Abdul Shariff, was killed while on assignment in the township of Kathlehong. The authors mourned their loss, but when they returned to the township a month later, their sadness was wrenched into sharp perspective. "We stopped at a shack . . . to see what was going on. There we met Distance, a hardened ANC fighter. . . . It was a quiet day and one of us mentioned Abdul. Distance looked at us and then said: 'I am not sorry your friend Abdul was killed. It is good that one of you dies. Nothing personal, but now you feel what is happening to us every day.'"

There is much in this book that is highly disturbing, from the grisliness of the struggle to the "professional thrill" Marinovich feels when he comes upon a grotesquely mutilated man who "looked as if he had been crucified." *The Bang-Bang Club* is both politically informative and emotionally forthright—as, I suspect, are its authors, who look at themselves and their work unsparingly. In the end, they come to a hard-won but sensible conclusion: "We had not personally suffered like some of the people we photographed, but neither were we responsible for their suffering—we had just witnessed it."

Only connect. Or only disconnect? As the events of the 1990s show, the rich, peaceful countries are mightily confused when it comes to the poor, war-torn ones. To see, or look away? To intervene, or stay away? To stop evil, or accept it? To remake the world, or keep amassing profits? To participate in history, or hope that it's ended? James Nachtwey's photographs do not provide answers, though they certainly pose these questions to any quasi-sentient viewer. But the questions themselves are not necessarily welcome; in his *Village Voice* review, Woodward accused Nachtwey of "holding a gun to our heads" and demanded, "Should we be grateful? Admire his eye?. . . If we don't send a check to Oxfam after a visit with these ghosts, are we complicit in their terrible lives?"

I cannot answer Woodward's first two queries, but the answer to the third is self-evident: we are complicit in "their" terrible lives whether we send a check, or not. This doesn't mean that we are all brothers under the skin, nor can it truthfully be said (except by Bill Clinton) that we feel each other's pain. Indeed, Marshall McLuhan's communitarian vision of the global village has proved to be a cozy fake; a more apt metaphor for today's world might be the global plantation. But even—or especially—on plantations, the fortunes and the futures of rich and poor are often closely intertwined.

Journalist Martha Gellhorn, who was in Dachau on the day the Germans surrendered, wrote that the discovery of the death camp made her ashamed to be human. Nachtwey's pictures inspire a similar but entirely fitting revulsion, which may be why, in discussions of his work, a fantasy of distance repeatedly emerges. The *Columbia Journalism Review* titled its gushing profile "Pictures from Hell"; the *New Yorker*'s arch assessment was called "Seasons in Hell," while the *Voice*'s resentful tirade was headlined "To Hell and Back." But what we find in Nachtwey's photos isn't hell—it's the earth, our earth, the only one we have, the one we share with (not rent to) Rwandans and Bosnians and Chechens and Sudanese and all sorts of despised and terrifying "mutants." *Inferno* is a terrible name for Nachtwey's book—it mystifies by suggesting that we are, or even could be, anywhere but here. A more accurate title would have been *The Family of Man, Continued*. ●

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Discriminating Rage

James T. Campbell

CLASS NOTES: POSING AS POLITICS AND OTHER THOUGHTS ON THE AMERICAN SCENE
by Adolph Reed, Jr.
The New Press, 2000 211 pp $25

STIRRINGS IN THE JUG: BLACK POLITICS IN THE POST-SEGREGATION ERA
by Adolph Reed, Jr.
Minnesota, 1999 303 pp $18.95

WITHOUT JUSTICE FOR ALL: THE NEW LIBERALISM AND OUR RETREAT FROM RACIAL EQUALITY
edited by Adolph Reed, Jr.
Westview, 1999 460 pp $28 cloth $22 paper

THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS ago, in a celebrated exchange with Irving Howe, Ralph Ellison lamented American intellectuals' persistent refusal to recognize the full, complex humanity of African-Americans. "Why is it so often true that when critics confront the American as Negro they suddenly drop their advanced critical armament and revert with an air of confident superiority to quite primitive modes of analysis?" he asked. Why did so many otherwise subtle thinkers persist in treating black life "as an opaque steel jug with the Negroes inside waiting for some black messiah to come along and blow the cork?"

Many things have happened since then, not least the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which fundamentally transformed African-Americans' relationship to the wider American polity. Yet Ellison's lament remains curiously apt. As Adolph Reed argues, the victories of the civil rights era have generated no commensurate change in the way most Americans think about black life, and about black politics in particular. For all the right-wing raving about "political correctness," representations of African-Americans in both academic and popular culture remain mired in dismally familiar stereotypes: blacks as shiftless, violent, and vice-prone on one hand, or emotional, spontaneous, and righteously Christian on the other. Commentators across the political spectrum refer unproblematically to "the black community," as if African-Americans inhabited a single, separate space, "simultaneously opaque to those outside it . . . and smoothly organic" to those within. A century after the rise of Booker T. Washington and thirty-six years after the Voting Rights Act, we still turn to designated racial "spokesmen"—Jesse Jackson for much of the 1980s, and more recently a coterie of university-based black intellectuals—to disclose the "black point of view." (Imagine producers of *Nightline* dragging out the same half-dozen people to convey the "white point of view" on issues of the day. Whom would they choose?)

Adolph Reed has spent the better part of twenty years reflecting on this baleful state of affairs. In the process, he has earned a strangely schizophrenic reputation. A professor of political science at the New School, Reed is best known for his columns and essays in such periodicals as the *Progressive*, the *Village Voice*, and the *Nation*, which have earned him renown as a trenchant and fearless radical polemicist. Critic Katha Pollitt puts the case simply: Reed is "the smartest person of any race, class or gender writing about race, class and gender" in the United States today. At the same time, the ad hominem character of some of Reed's writing, his penchant for personal vituperation, has made him perhaps the most reviled figure in African-American studies today. Opponents deride him as petulant and puerile, a "loose cannon" whose furi-

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ous salvoes serve only to antagonize would-be allies.

The fact that Reed is so catholic in his criticisms makes the problem all the more ticklish. Leftists may cheer when he skewers Charles Murray (the notorious author of *Losing Ground* and *The Bell Curve*) or fulminates against the craven hypocrisies of the Democratic Leadership Council. But they are less comfortable when he brands liberal poverty researchers such as William Julius Wilson and Christopher Jencks "poverty pimps" and "upscale welfare frauds." And they are apt to be completely nonplussed by his withering attacks on prominent black progressives such as Cornel West ("a mile wide and an inch deep"), Manning Marable ("never to be outdone at piling up labels"), and Michael Eric Dyson (whom he variously compares to Joseph Goebbels and to Pigmeat Markham, minus the burnt cork).

WHATEVER ONE thinks of Reed, there is little doubt that his sheer outrageousness has impeded critical engagement with his ideas. Even sympathetic readers tend to talk as much about the propriety of his writing as its substance. The difficulty is compounded by the dispersion of Reed's work in various periodicals and scholarly books and journals, making it difficult to appreciate as a whole—all of which makes the appearance of these three new books a most welcome event. For the first time, it is possible to take a sustained look at the thought of one of America's most controversial—and certainly one of its angriest—political analysts.

The books under review are very different, reflecting Reed's diverse callings as critic, intellectual historian, political scientist, and activist. (A veteran political organizer, Reed is a member of the National Council of the recently established Labor Party.) The most accessible of the three books—and the most entertaining—is *Class Notes*, a collection of Reed's columns and essays spanning most of the 1990s. *Without Justice for All*, which Reed edited and to which he contributed a coauthored essay on public housing, is a more conventionally academic work, bringing together essays by a dozen social scientists interested in what Reed calls "the new liberal orthodoxy on race and inequality." *Stirrings in the Jug*—the title deliberately evokes Ellison—is also cast in a scholarly mold, but its subject could not be more topical: the demise of black activism, and of progressive politics generally, in "post-segregation" America.

For all their differences, the books share certain signature characteristics. Few if any political analysts today possess Reed's historical imagination, his ability to move between past and present in ways that illuminate both. Equally remarkable is Reed's capacity to weave together theoretical and empirical analyses, to connect, say, a discussion of the "culture industry" in the work of the intellectuals of the Frankfurt School to a critique of the current academic infatuation with "hip-hop" culture. Above all, all three books exhibit a profound faith in politics—in the right and capacity of all people, including blacks, women, the poor, and other members of the so-called "underclass," to participate as full citizens in the American polity, without the mediation of "experts," "charismatic" leaders, cultural studies doyens, "Bantustan administrators," or other would-be "interpreters" and "brokers." When these elements come together—as they do, for example, in the final chapter of *Stirrings in the Jug*, which charts the refashioning of Malcolm X from political activist to decontextualized, commodified icon—the results are scintillating.

While Reed's rage is abundantly in evidence in all three books, it is more discriminating than some might suppose. Almost invariably, it is directed against the "trivialization of politics," against those who neglect the political capacities of the oppressed or, worse, arrogate to themselves the right to speak on their behalf. Not surprisingly, Reed is particularly sensitive to this failing in critics on the left, who, he believes, should know better. In *Class Notes*, in particular, he rails against the "besetting sins" of the contemporary left: the elevation of militant "posturing" over substantive political engagement, especially among university-based intellectuals; the chronic failure to think critically about black politics; the casual disparagement of electoral politics. On several occasions, he wonders aloud whether radicals, both black and white, have heard of the Voting Rights Act.

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Although all three books address contemporary political issues, they rest on an argument about history, specifically about the persistence in the post-segregation era of a political style conceived during Jim Crow. In its nineteenth-century incarnation, this mode, which Reed calls "custodial politics," had two defining characteristics: an assumption of the fundamental identity of black interests; and the investment of political agency in a narrow stratum of middle-class racial "spokesmen," who presumed to embody and articulate the interests of "the race." Inherently classist, custodial politics emphasized the black elite's special "tutelary role" toward the black "masses"—what we today might call role modeling. This politics also placed great value on white "recognition," magnifying symbolic concessions to elite blacks—inviting Booker T. Washington to lunch at the White House, for example—into victories for the race as a whole. Indeed, in the perverse logic of disfranchisement, white recognition often served as the primary token of black leadership, as W. E. B. Du Bois complained at the time.

Reed concedes that custodial politics were logical, indeed inevitable, in the Jim Crow South. The brute facts of segregation and disfranchisement did produce an unusual degree of political unanimity among black Americans, while eliminating the usual mechanisms for selecting leaders and ensuring their accountability. Even the arch classism of black political leadership, the elaborate displays of "culture" and "respectability," had a logic, refuting prevailing racial ideologies that denied African-Americans' capacity ever to rise above the level of brutes.

THE QUESTION for Reed is not why such politics existed but why they persist. Why is black diversity still so routinely discounted? Who chooses these spokesmen that appear on our televisions, and what specific constituencies do they represent? How do we explain the revival of Washingtonian self-help ideology—now typically garbed as "community empowerment"—or the endless hand wringing about the need for "middle-class role models" for the black poor?

In today's political climate, simply posing such questions is a service, but Reed also sets out to answer them. Much of the problem, he notes, stems from white Americans' perdurable tendency to see black people as fundamentally different from themselves, a perspective that leaves even progressive whites susceptible to stereotypes and simplifications—to media reports about "welfare queens," adolescent "super-predators," the teen pregnancy "epidemic," and so forth. The notion of an "underclass" offers a limpid illustration of the process. In a neat bit of intellectual history, Reed shows how the concept, which has roots stretching back to Victorian ideas about the "undeserving" poor, entered contemporary discourse in the early 1980s via impressionistic journalistic accounts of ghetto life. Within the space of two or three years, it had become a core premise of urban poverty research, notwithstanding the category's palpable sexism or the inability of its purveyors to define it in anything but the most arbitrary or nakedly tautological way. The term was then recycled in the media and in political discourse, lending a scientific air to shopworn, right-wing charges that the poor were somehow responsible for their own plight, that poverty was a product of "behavior" rather than public policy.

Reed clearly enjoys castigating liberals, but he also finds roots of the current impasse in intellectual and political impulses within the left: in the New Left tendency to treat involvement with formal governmental institutions as somehow "inauthentic or corrupting" (an aversion, he notes, shared by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher); in the rise of structuralism and, later, poststructuralism, which he sees as providing elaborate theoretical explanations for why the basic institutional order of a society could not be (or, in the latter case, need not be) overturned; in the academic left's embrace of so-called "cultural politics"—"the Straussianism of the Bennetton generation," he calls it—which reads "hidden transcripts" of resistance into the music, iconography, and even "sartorial and tonsorial" preferences of the oppressed. All these tendencies, he argues, deflect attention away from the real business at hand: organizing large numbers of people into political coalitions to contest for state power and the right to shape public policy.

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Reed is particularly critical of Black Power ideology, which reached its zenith at precisely the moment that the Voting Rights Act was enacted. Black Power, he argues, shared many of the governing assumptions of the white movements of which it was the ostensible antithesis: a "corporatist" vision of the black "community"; disdain for formal politics as "inauthentic"; a conviction that questions of class and competing interest, so pivotal in understanding white politics, somehow mattered less among blacks. Besides opening a door for demagogues, he writes, such an analysis left radicals without the "conceptual tools" to understand the complexities of "post-segregation" black politics, particularly in cities like Atlanta, Cleveland, and Gary, where black regimes were assuming control of local government and social welfare bureaucracies. The wages of this failure were dramatically revealed in Atlanta in 1977, when Mayor Maynard Jackson summarily sacked two thousand striking sanitation workers, most of them black. The episode was doubly poignant, not only because of the circumstances of Martin Luther King's death—King, recall, came to Memphis to support striking garbage collectors—but because Jackson himself had first earned popular acclaim a few years before when, as vice mayor, he walked out of City Hall to join picketing sanitation workers. For Reed, however, the telling fact was less the firing itself than the silence that ensued, the failure of black radicals in particular to advance any sustained criticism of Jackson's action.

As it happens, Reed was a graduate student in Atlanta in the 1970s, and the city became for him a kind of "natural laboratory" to observe the emergence of what he calls a new politics of "race relations management." Although he has referred to the experience in other writings, he offers the first systematic report of his findings in *Stirrings in the Jug*, fully half of which is devoted to a discussion of the "black urban regimes" that arose in the years after 1965. Readers accustomed to thinking of Reed as a bomb thrower will be surprised by the balance and subtlety of his analysis. Unlike a number of prominent critics, Reed refuses to dismiss Mayor Jackson and his ilk as dupes or "sell outs," an approach, he notes, that leads only to a stale debate about the "sincerity" and "authenticity" of this or that black leader. He acknowledges the daunting problems these new regimes inherited, problems that were, almost by definition, most severe in those cities in which blacks came to power. (At the same time, he reminds us that the primary manifestations of urban crisis—deindustrialization, suburban flight, a declining tax base, collapsing infrastructure—need to be understood not as natural or neutral "structural changes in the American economy," as most liberals would have it, but as the outcome of specific, highly racialized political processes.) Last but not least, Reed emphasizes the concrete improvements in the lives of black and poor citizens that the election of black public officials produced, in everything from access to municipal jobs and contracts to reduced rates of police brutality.

YET EVEN with these concessions, there is no denying the failures of these urban regimes. Reed shows how a complex of forces—chronic fiscal crisis, the pressures of professional socialization, a pragmatic desire to reassure skeptical whites, the logic of incumbency—propelled black urban officials away from their insurgent roots toward a familiar custodial posture. Erstwhile activists like Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young, his successor, would become not only consummate political insiders but vital cogs in "a new mode of administrative domination," predicated on public-private "cooperation" and the priority of "growth and development." Within this political universe, which remains hegemonic in most American cities today, the chief responsibility of municipal authorities is not to redress historical inequities or the imagined grievances of "special interests," but to attract the investment on which the survival of the city as a whole is presumed to hinge. In practice, this usually means employing public funds to underwrite private development, through tax abatements, selective investments in infrastructure, and other direct and indirect subsidies to would-be investors. Such projects, the argument goes, benefit everyone, by restoring sagging urban morale and providing the air of dynamism necessary to attract (white) capital.

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The ironies are palpable. Though invariably defended as a "responsible" alternative to redistributive policies, pro-development policies are emphatically redistributive: wealth flows to the wealthy. Relatively few of the billions of taxpayer dollars invested in new convention centers and football stadiums find their way into the pockets of the urban poor, aside from what might "trickle down" through minority set asides or from the expansion of low-wage, low-skill jobs in an increasingly segmented labor market. But the real irony, from Reed's point of view, is to be found in the character of black politics. The most visible products of a generation of civil rights agitation, black urban regimes have become vehicles not for popular mobilization but for the perpetuation of a kind of neo-Jim Crow politics, in which a narrow "leadership" stratum exacts concessions from capital in exchange for delivering black support for (or at least acquiescence to) an ongoing "corporate reorganization of American economic life." To be sure, the resources being dispensed today are vastly greater than in Booker T. Washington's time, as is the proportion of black people accorded a share, but the arrangement itself precisely parallels the original "Atlanta Compromise."

There is much besides in these books, some of it brilliant, some of it scurrilous, some of it both. As Reed's readers have by now come to expect, the books include blistering commentary about Jesse Jackson, who has long served as Exhibit A in the case against custodial politics. (Reed hilariously recounts Jackson's refusal to endorse Michael Dukakis in 1988 until he had been guaranteed use of his own airplane for the fall campaign, comparing the bargain to the private rail car that Booker T. Washington received from his philanthropic sponsors to spare him the indignity of riding Jim Crow.) Notorious essays such as "Tokens of the White Left" and "What are the Drums Saying?", in which he examines "the curious role of the black public intellectual," reward rereading, though they contain passages that will strike most readers as unfortunate, if not unfair. Whether assaying nineteenth-century scientific racism (now experiencing an unexpected revival) or the O.J. Simpson trial ("just another instance of the American version of Weimar decadence, in which trash TV provides the basis and frame for collective social experience"), Reed always has something novel and provocative to say.

If there is one thread that ties these books together, it is politics—not "cultural" or "identity" politics, not community-based "self help," but formal, electoral politics, focused on the acquisition and exercise of public authority through democratic means. Just as the Pentagon is not forced to "sell chicken dinners at Fort Bragg" when it wants a new missile system, poor people should not have to pass the hat when they want to repair an elevator in public housing or to sleep safely in their homes. Such things, for Reed, are among the "basic responsibilities" of government, and it is the responsibility of progressives to ensure that government fulfills them. And that means political organizing.

ORGANIZING, in turn, means building coalitions. This, Reed insists, does not mean denying difference, ignoring the realities of discrimination or the value that people may attach to particularistic identities. In all these books, he highlights the continuing ravages of racism and sexism, and the innumerable ways in which state authority actively underwrites them. He provides a ringing defense of affirmative action, directed not only at conservatives but at those leftists and liberals who would, in the name of expediency or a misguided "universalism," jettison it. Yet one can respect particularity without making it the primary basis of political allegiance. Many of the most pressing issues currently confronting African-Americans, Reed notes, are also faced by millions of other Americans: the search for meaningful work and a living wage; the struggle to secure affordable housing, health care, and child care; the fight to maintain equitable, high quality public facilities, from parks to public schools to policing. This, for Reed, is the only terrain on which a viable progressive movement can be built.

He does not suggest that the work will be easy. Building political organizations is a "painstaking, slow and time-consuming process," that carries "no guarantees of victory or even shorter-term success." It means working "face

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to face, door to door," to "build support and solidarity among real people in real places around concrete objectives that they perceive as concerns—people who may not, indeed probably do not, all start from what is generally understood as a left political perspective..." Above all, building a progressive movement in post-segregation America requires rediscovering a belief in politics, an appreciation, in Reed's words, of the "fluid and contingent" nature of politics and of the essential "openness of history." The boundaries of the politically possible are not given but made; the future is not yet written. Surely this is a message worth entertaining, whatever one thinks of the messenger. ●

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Fandom, Faith, and Bruce Springsteen

Jefferson Cowie

TRAMPS LIKE US: MUSIC AND MEANING AMONG SPRINGSTEEN FANS
by Daniel Cavicchi
Oxford University Press, 1998 256 pp $19.95

IT AIN'T NO SIN TO BE GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE: THE PROMISE OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
by Eric Alterman
Little, Brown, 1999 282 pp $20

WHEN I WAS eighteen years old, I abandoned my small Midwestern town with a vengeance. It was a place where my friends and I joked about who would be the first to succumb to a kid, a mortgage, and a job at the local machine works, Precision Twist and Drill. I had only the slightest inkling at the time that the economic and political transformations gripping the country in the late 1970s were transforming what we most feared in life—a good manufacturing job and an affordable home—into one of the most coveted set of trappings in blue-collar America. Our fears were best expressed in Bruce Springsteen's haunting title cut to his 1980 album, *The River*. His tale of despair, entrapment, and unwanted pregnancy left him to lament, "And for my nineteenth birthday I got a union card and wedding coat/ We went down to the courthouse/ And the judge put it all to rest/ No wedding day smiles, no walk down the aisle/ No flowers, no wedding dress."

Seeking to escape such a fate, I rolled out of town in a chartreuse Volkswagen detailed with cancerous rust and crammed with the possessions that only an adolescent male might deem essential. I slipped into the battered tape deck the anthem that served as the bedrock of my psychic survival throughout the trying years of adolescence. "Thunder Road," the classic opening song from Springsteen's 1975 album, *Born to Run*, evoked all that I sought to leave behind—front porches, tentative girlfriends, and Roy Orbison's lonely ones. In exchange, I believed myself to be embracing "faith" and "magic in the night." Following groundwork laid by dissenting wanderers from Walt Whitman to Jack Kerouac, I pointed the car toward the west-bound side of the interstate. Rolling down the on-ramp toward California, I punctuated the last line of the song, as we always did, with head out the window and my voice straining to compete with Bruce's: "It's a town full of losers/ And I'm pulling out of here to win"!

I was reminded of this awkward turning point in my life when I, along with tens of thousands of other fans, sang those same words more than two decades later at New Jersey's

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Meadowlands during one of the fifteen sold-out shows of the E Street Band reunion tour. The stagehands threw on the house lights for "Thunder Road" as fans united in chorus. For the first time that evening, our focus was directed toward each other rather than the stage—a reminder of the ways in which music offered collective salvation from the isolation and loneliness of our seemingly individual struggles. "Well now I'm no hero/ That's understood/ All the redemption I can offer, girl/ Is beneath this dirty hood . . . take hold/ Thunder Road"! As our separate lives came out of the darkness for one brief, and all too rare, moment of solidarity, I realized that Springsteen had done more to help me sever my roots than he had to help me learn about the reality of social class in America. His "show a little faith" message may have been a way out of the present, but it certainly was not one of collective emancipation. Yet it resonated with me more than any political message ever had.

Despite the quality of the performance that night, in which Springsteen led his loyal followers through classic hits and obscure treats like a Baptist preacher on a roll, I could not turn off my brain and surrender to the moment. What drew all of these people together and for what purpose? It was much easier to critique Springsteen's performances on political grounds or on the limits of his art in the context of race or gender than it was to understand his enormous appeal. In my own little world, Springsteen, even in his full pop presentation, had shaped a sort of modern and personalized folk culture among the alienated—a shared discourse, a set of assumptions, a world of values that we could adopt for our own. So the harder project was not to criticize him but to understand what drew us to this "rich man in a poor man's shirt" (his own lyrical description).

An impressive effort to understand the collective mind of those who have been snapping up tickets around the world in the last two years is Daniel Cavicchi's *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans* (his fans often call themselves "tramps"). Are the legions of Bruceheads mere dupes for an over-sold, prepackaged pop commodity as Fred Goodman argued in his analysis of rock and commerce, *The Mansion on the Hill*? Or, as the neo-Marxists argue, do fans appropriate the performer for their own purposes, sifting through the record-machine hype to appropriate their own meaning in some sort of closet counter-hegemonic struggle? Fortunately, there is a paucity of academic theory in this otherwise scholarly book. What the reader culls from Cavicchi's explorations is a sense of connectedness between the performer and his fans—a deep, felt, almost religious sense of meaning in his music and a tremendous level of participation and investment in Springsteen's performance and artistic choices.

Although Cavicchi's anthropology wanders between laborious, undigested interviews with Springsteen followers and genuine insight into the nature of fandom, the issue of faith, in both the rocker's performances and the fans' understanding of them, is the most fascinating aspect of *Tramps Like Us*. Increasingly, as the themes of adolescence, cars, and solitary escape have faded from Springsteen's performances, in their place has risen a sense of big-tent revivalism that was never far from the surface in his early work. Consider Cavicchi's account of Springsteen's performance of the rocking "Light of Day"—a description any fan would recognize. The concert staple, complete with screeching guitars and a thumping baseline, comes to a complete and unexpected halt after about five minutes of driving rock 'n' roll. Springsteen freezes on his knees in the middle of the stage in complete silence. The audience quickly catches on, attempting to energize him back into playing with chants of "Bruuuuuce!" With a twitch of his head he gets one side of the stadium to burst into a thunderous roar; with a subtle glance back in the other direction, he incites the remaining half of the crowd to screams and waves. After a series of titillating pauses, he slips into his evangelical preacher/prison routine, whipping the crowd into a feverish revival:

> I'm here because I know you're downhearted! (Yeah!)
> I know you're disappointed! (Yeah!)
> I know you're depressed! (Yeah!)
> I know you're low in spirit! (Yeah!)

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And I'm here tonight because I—(Yeah!)
I got something I need to testify to! (Yeah!)
I've got something I got to tell you! (Yeah!)
I got something I need to witness to! (Yeah!) ...
[Pauses for crowd to cheer and then a full-throated scream]
I'm just a prisoner!
Of rock 'n' roll!

With a crash of the cymbals the band brings the song home with the crowd on the verge of frenzy. As Springsteen exclaimed in his recent tour, he's "reborn, rededicated, resuscitated, reinvigorated and rejuvenated with the magic, the mystery and the ministry of rock 'n' roll!" In the more melancholy and claustrophobic mood of "Open All Night," the message is the same: only music can save the narrator from the desolation of the open road. "Radio's jammed up with gospel stations, lost souls callin' long distance salvation; Hey, mister D.J., won'tcha hear my last prayer; hey, ho, rock 'n' roll, deliver me from nowhere."

Despite such religious overtones to Springsteen's performance and the dedication of his fans who read his lyrics with the intensity of Talmudic scholars, Cavicchi is careful not to argue that fandom is a religion, but that the deep-seated sense of belonging, shared values, and search for renewal all address concerns and engage people in the same way that religion does. The opportunity for introspection, the sources for questioning of values, the foil for an exploration of meaning, all function to scrutinize the self in relationship to an artist and a larger society (both lyrical and real). While it would be ludicrous to see popular music as religion, the mechanisms he describes do serve as a sort of constructive, therapeutic worldview for congregants that gather in the house of rock. The author never quite answers the large theoretical questions about the relationship between the production and reception of popular culture, but he does make a powerful and refreshing argument that this relationship has been over-theorized and under-appreciated. "Fandom may figure in the power of the mass culture industry, and it may also be a kind of twentieth-century cult," he claims, "but for fans, it is about devotion, creating meaning in daily life through sustained attention to musical performance."

As effectively as Cavicchi has penetrated the world view of the Springsteen fan, he never quite gets to the difference between Bruce fandom, which he argues has meaningful roots in the existential struggles of everyday life, and "regular" fandom. We are left to ponder that if Springsteen fans have ignored or made their peace with the commerce of rock in their search for meaning, have Madonna fans? Puff Daddy fans? The Carpenters fans? What about pure spectacles that draw increasing numbers of fans such as professional wrestling or monster truck rallies? Or is Springsteen in his own category—or at least among a select few? Springsteen himself may fear that he has slipped too far into the mold of a generic, aging spectacle. He began inserting a revealing jeremiad into his recent tour: "I will not abide a lack of commitment!" he proclaims to fans who are too often drifting out for beer during his performance of the overtly political "Youngstown."

STILL, THE power and persuasiveness of both Springsteen's vision and Cavicchi's concept of fandom is best captured by the fact that as serious a critic of the American political economy as Eric Alterman is a "tramp" too. Alterman, whose books have stuck it to the media punditry and challenged the foundations of the foreign policy establishment, whose contributions to the *Nation* rip into the body politic, is an incurable romantic on the subject of Bruce Springsteen. "There were any number of times since I had turned fifteen when I had felt as if Bruce were somehow saving my life," explains Alterman like another crazed devotee in Cavicchi's study of fandom. "He had been a source of hope and inspiration," Alterman continues, "of friendship and fortitude, of therapy and solidarity, of consolation and exhilaration. He still was." When he finally met Springsteen briefly, I imagine Alterman had to resist the impulse to gush like Wayne and Garth, who declared themselves "not worthy" at the feet of Alice Cooper in *Wayne's World*. Instead, he managed to keep his poise, simply thanking him for "everything." Alterman declares that his book *It Ain't No Sin to Be Glad You're Alive* contains everything he

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would have liked to have told his hero the evening of their brief encounter.

Part history, part rock criticism, part biography, part autobiography, part industry analysis, and part rumination on the state of the world, Alterman's breezy study defies simple categorization. The author will certainly take some hits from critics who will see his work as more than a bit sycophantic, but, like *Tramps*, this book is a testament to the importance of faith and meaning in the everyday life of a thoughtful rock fan. Take Alterman's recollection of Springsteen's breakthrough album *Born to Run*. That album, he writes, "offered me an alternative context for my life, a narrative in which hopes and dreams that felt ridiculous were accorded dignity and, no less important, solidarity." Having missed Yom Kippur morning with his family because he stayed late at Madison Square Garden for Bruce's appearance at the "No Nukes" concert, Alterman echoes one of Cavicchi's main themes, justifying his missed obligation on the grounds that he was already in the midst of a devoted community of epic proportions. "This was not just music anymore," he claims, "It was something bigger, more powerful, more . . . like religion."

In Springsteen's world, such faith clearly trumps politics, but that does not prevent others from searching for his political core. At the height of the 1980s "Born in the U.S.A." mania, cartoonist Berke Breathed lampooned the corruptibility of Springsteen's politics in his comic strip, "Bloom County." When the character Binkley was given a look into the future, Binkley's older self prattled on about his one moment of glory—a bit of organized resistance at the job—that is, until "President Springsteen" fired everyone. The hilarity of the contrast between the rocker's art, popularity, and lyrical themes against the backdrop of a political vision that has always been more presumed than real, begs volumes of questions about the content of his art. If the world is as desperate and deferential as the lonely Springsteen character slogging up the hill in the "darkness on the edge of town," then what is to be done? As Alterman rhetorically asks his idol,

> Is the problem capitalism? Work itself? Would the workers still have deathly eyes if they were represented by powerful, militant unions . . .? What if the company established worker-ownership committees or employee stock options? None of these questions are asked, much less answered. This is, the songwriter seems to tell us, just the way things are.

INDEED, there are never collective or political solutions in Springsteen's lyrical world; there is rarely even a sense of the broader social fabric that his characters inhabit. There is, however, a solidarity in the individual, perhaps uniquely American struggle to make one's way in an often mean world. It is an odd solidarity that one is not alone: that when the house lights go up, there are thousands of others singing the same lyrics and asking the same questions. It's explicitly not a path to the beloved community of the civil rights movement or the movement culture of the social gospel. Springsteen's art and popularity would suffer if it were. In the end, his politics may be of "an old-fashioned New Deal social democrat" as Alterman believes, but his true gift is in presenting paths for individual deliverance to the disorganized armies of the faithless.

As Alterman suggests, Springsteen may be the last curious icon of social realism—a connection made explicit with his recent adoption of Woody Guthrie's mantle. Springsteen sings not with metaphor, illusion, or detachment, but of populist struggles of the real and mundane. That may be why he appeals to a certain type of fan while others simply cannot relate to him. "Springsteen sings with so profound a lack of irony," Alterman explains, "that his message is nearly impossible to give credence to in a postmodern universe." It's not that the problems of social class or alienation have been solved since Springsteen's rise to the status of Dylan and Elvis, it's just that the combined sense of ennui and miscreant rage gripping the strip malls might better be captured in the fiery jabs of a Kurt Cobain, the anger of an Ice-T, or the gender-bending of a Marilyn Manson than the struggle "to find the key to the universe in the engine of an old parked car."

If the bulk of Springsteen's work uses class oppression as a vehicle for exploring themes of individual survival, it works so well because the rocker absorbed his history lessons deeply. He readily sees both the distance between the

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promise of the United States and the often painful reality, as well as the power of music to assist in making the voyage between the two. As Springsteen told an audience in 1981:

> It wasn't until I started listening to the radio, and I heard something in those singers' voices that said there was more to life than what my old man was doing and the life that I was living. And they held out a promise, and it was a promise that every man has a right to live his life with some decency and some dignity. And it's a promise that gets broken every day in the most violent way. But it's a promise that never, ever dies, and it's always inside of you.

Here we see Springsteen, the music fan, adopting the popular music around him for his own struggles just as Cavicchi argued that his fans continue to do to this day. And Springsteen understands that his audiences are looking to him as he looked to Elvis, Dylan, Sam Cooke, Mitch Ryder, and a host of one-hit wonders to fuel the visceral rebelliousness that is at the core of rock 'n' roll. Springsteen shoulders his responsibility to his fans with enormous fortitude, grace, and commitment—illustrated most obviously by his tremendous physical output during shows that often last into the wee hours and continue to amaze even the most jaded critic. Springsteen knows that what was once his search is now his fans' search, and they relate to him because, first and foremost, he is the nation's number one fan of rock 'n' roll. He also happens to head up the best bar band in the country—an unbeatable combination.

The travails of Springsteen's characters may not offer any real solutions to concrete problems of working people, but they paint a portrait of alienation and a sensitivity to class not seen in popular culture since the passing of the elder Hank Williams. Few songs expose the tension between the power of the America story and its seamy underside better than Springsteen's biggest, and most misunderstood, hit, "Born in the U.S.A." Nearly lost in the tidal wave of sound pouring from the thundering guitars and the hoarse, grinding voice chanting the title lyric, is a quiet tale of despair. The story of a Vietnam vet searching for work and dignity amid the declining fortunes of an American dream gone awry is almost completely drowned out in the dominant chorus of patriotism. The wandering worker, "down in the shadow of the penitentiary," has "nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go." Like the Springsteen listener, however, his faith in the American project remains unshaken; he's still, above all, "a cool rocking Daddy in the U.S.A." who will push forward with a fierce conviction that borders on denial.

If the narrator of "Born in the U.S.A." carries his birthright as a cross to bear more than a cause for celebration, so do the individuals in the new song "American Skin (41 Shots)." Debuted amid national controversy at the end of his recent tour, the tense, stark song explores the New York City police shooting of an unarmed immigrant, Amadou Diallo. "Is it a gun?/ Is it a knife?/ Is it a wallet?/ This is your life," declares Springsteen, "Ain't no secret/ My friend my friend/ You can get killed just for living in your American skin." The mention of "skin," in the highly racialized discourse of American politics has been presumed to mean black by both critics and celebrants of the song. The president of the New York City Police Benevolent Association, for instance, called Springsteen a "dirtbag" and declared a security boycott of further shows on the assumption that the artist was mounting a direct assault on racial profiling and police violence. Those who have heralded the piece as a way to keep attention on a police force out of control have also missed the point. Springsteen is suggesting something tied less to the political moment and more transcendental and historical. As he has managed on a few other occasions, his empathetic portraiture cleverly toys with images and dialogue that privilege neither cop nor victim. Instead, as death weighs on both characters equally, the central actor is the abstract burden of race itself. The title of his song is literal: a singularly troubled *American* skin given shape by a history of racial unrest. "Forty-one shots my boots caked in mud," he sings in the last stanza, "We're baptized in these waters and in each other's blood."

Brother Bruce's revivalist tent is thus big; the canvas stretches above both Diallo and his murderers like the American skin of which he

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sings. Beneath that canvas he sees the interconnectedness of white and black, worker and boss, native and immigrant, and men and women, not in nostalgic terms that seek to deny conflict, but in gritty terms that can only be explored on the level of individual despair. His live performances consistently tap into that alienation, but tease fans, at times reluctantly, into a broader sense of humanity—"nobody wins unless everybody wins" he used to shout before launching into "Born to Run." If he rarely proselytizes about politics and collective action, his evangelical rock does preach a secular American faith through an appeal to what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature." And that, in essence, may be what attracts people like Alterman and the countless tramps in Cavicchi's study. Bruce Springsteen doesn't provide any answers, they know. But, to quote a track from the dark and haunting *Nebraska* album, "Still at the end of every hard earned day people find some reason to believe." ●

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Workers of the Diaspora

Jonathan Frankel

JEWISH WORKERS IN THE MODERN DIASPORA
Nancy L. Green, ed.
University of California Press, 1998 256 pp
$40 cloth $14.95 paper

READY-TO-WEAR AND READY-TO-WORK: A CENTURY OF INDUSTRY AND IMMIGRANTS IN PARIS AND NEW YORK
by Nancy L. Green
Duke University Press, 1997 426 pp
$59.95 cloth $19.95 paper

THESE TWO books, both the work of Nancy Green (an American professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris) belong to different genres and each has a very different focus, but it is where they overlap that they are perhaps most interesting. *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora* is a collection of documents, many translated into English for the first time, selected to give an immediate sense of what day-to-day life was like in the densely packed Jewish quarters of Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Paris, London, and New York in the years 1880-1939. Drawing on newspaper articles, leaflets, poetry, and fiction, it provides an important supplement to *The Jew in the Modern World*, the by-now standard anthology of Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, which concentrates more on political and intellectual than on social history. In contrast, *Ready-to-Wear and Ready-to-Work* is a monograph in which Green compares the history of the garment industry (with emphasis on women's clothing) in New York and Paris from the late nineteenth century until today. Equipped with an impressive scholarly apparatus, *Ready-to-Wear* is a readable history with a happy minimum of social science jargon. Mixing technical and statistical detail with local color, it belongs to the same species (to take a classic example) as David Landes's history of the Swiss watch industry, *Revolution in Time*.

Both of Green's books revolve around a shared fulcrum: the mass migration of the Jews from Eastern Europe and their proletarianization in the burgeoning cities of the West. In the one case, the immigrant experience is set in the context of modern Jewish history; and in the other it is taken as a salient example of

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how wave after wave of migrants have fed into, and been fed by, the garment industry in the two world centers of ladies' fashion: Paris and New York City. Or, as Green puts it, the Jewish tailor can serve as "a metaphor for other immigrants in the garment labor market."

Based on a consistently comparative approach, the two works are designed to highlight both similarity and difference, whether within the increasingly dispersed Jewish diaspora or within the ever-lengthening line of migrations to the West from across the globe. Set against this backdrop, the sheer scale of Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe is astonishing. Proportionately, the only other exodus from Europe that surpassed it was that of the Catholic population from Ireland. Four million Jews moved westward between 1830 and 1925 to Central and Northern Europe, North and South America, South Africa, and Palestine (to this, one could add Australia).

The vast majority of these emigrants, though, left the lands of their birth during a mere half that time, 1880-1930, leaving behind a population of no more, perhaps, than seven million. In economic terms, what made this massive movement of mostly penniless people possible was the range of opportunities open, except in slump years, in manufacture (sweated labor) or in retail (peddling, street vending, carting). But, above all, it was the needle trades that consistently provided the newcomers, or "greenhorns," with their best chance to find an opening and some kind of minimal pay.

Even though the Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe came, for the most part, from small towns and villages, they tended to concentrate not only in very large cities but also in very specific districts within those cities. And there, as *Jewish Workers* amply illustrates, in the East End of London, the "Pletzl" (Marais) in Paris (the subject of yet a third book by Green published in 1986), the eleventh district in Buenos Aires, the Lower East Side of New York, and other smaller centers around the world, similar social patterns and processes reproduced themselves. At a furious rate, the new arrivals founded synagogues and prayer houses (there were twenty-nine Jewish congregations in New York in 1872, eight hundred in 1914), home-town fraternities (*landsmanshaftn*), trade unions, and Yiddish newspapers (in New York, of course, with huge success, but also, for example, in France, where no less than 130 periodicals in Yiddish appeared in the inter-war period). Everywhere that they settled in significant numbers, they brought with them the party politics and ideological feuds developed in the czarist empire: the militantly orthodox against the no less militant atheists, Marxists against anarchists, Zionists against Bundists, and, in the inter-war years, communists against socialists.

No less striking was the speed with which profound linguistic and social gaps opened up in all these centers between the immigrants and the second generation, parental authority eroding together with the use of the Yiddish language. Similarly, from very early on a high degree of social and geographic mobility came to be associated with this immigrant group—a perception not necessarily of the kind to win friends among the rest of the population.

These and many other such regularities clearly justify Green's plea that the historians should study the modern Diaspora as a unity. But, as these books demonstrate, the immigrant experience was marked also by major differences.

At the most fundamental (and ultimately fateful) level was the question of how easy it was to enter and settle in any given country at any given time—an issue raised, if only tangentially, in *Jewish Workers*. East European Jews were not made welcome in the German empire prior to 1914. Nor would Holland, with its indigenous and largely impoverished Jewish population in Amsterdam, have been an attractive option.

In contrast, Great Britain enjoyed an exceptionally positive image in the eyes of the Jews in Continental Europe, though the reverse was all too often not the case. With some 120,000 Jews from Eastern Europe settling in the country in the three decades before the First World War, the public had apparently had enough, and a series of laws in 1905, 1914, and 1919 brought such immigration to a "virtual halt." The United States, which in the parallel period saw the arrival of by far the greatest number of Jewish immigrants, as many as

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two million, followed suit with its own legislation in the early 1920s, cutting down entry from among all the populations of Eastern and Southern Europe to a mere trickle.

That left Argentina and France (apart from Mandatory Palestine) as the two major countries with their doors still ajar. Jews had first come from the Russian empire to Argentina in the 1890s under the auspices of Baron Maurice de Hirsch and his Jewish Colonization Association in order to settle as farmers, but by 1914 "many of the Jewish gauchos had left . . . for the city," bringing the number of East European Jews in Buenos Aires up to some fifty thousand. That number jumped over the next twenty years to perhaps 135,000; and Paris witnessed a very similar rise during these same years: from 35,000 to 150,000. The surprisingly liberal policy of France is explained by Green as a response to the catastrophic losses suffered during the First World War and to the country's extreme demographic stagnation. Be that as it may, by the mid-1930s, restrictions were in place even in these two countries of refuge (as in Palestine also), leaving nowhere for the Jews of Eastern Europe to go. Freedom of movement and its gradual foreclosure overshadow all else in this chapter of twentieth century history. But there were other points of contrast within the new Diaspora.

In most of their new countries, for example, the immigrants found long-standing Jewish communities (of German or Sephardi origin) already in place. But while these communities in the United States were largely atomized and inchoate, in Great Britain the Jewish establishment was centralized and powerful, decked around with quasi-official institutions (the Board of Deputies, the United Synagogue, the chief rabbi, and the Board of Guardians) and glorying in the prestige of the Rothschilds, the Montefiores, and the Montagus. So it is not surprising that when the women of the Lower East Side decided in 1902 to organize a protest against the inflated prices of kosher meat, they turned directly against the butchers. ("Thousands of women," the socialist daily, the *Forverts*, reported excitedly, "clashed with the butchers and their customers. . . . Dozens of [the women] were left bloodied in fights. Police wagons flew continually, loaded with arrested women.") In contrast, when thousands demonstrated in the East End of London in 1889 to protest unemployment, they marched to the Duke Street Synagogue at the time of the Friday night service, demanding—in vain, as they had expected—to be addressed by the chief rabbi.

In *Ready to Wear*, Green focuses her attention specifically on the relationship between mass immigration and the development of the garment industry in modern times. Her central thesis involves a paradox. On the one hand, Green shows how the clothing industry has followed the standard pattern dictated by the logic of technological innovation and market competition. Here we are very much in the world as predicted (more or less) by Karl Marx. The invention of the sewing machine combined with the rapid emergence of mass marketing (department stores, advertising, and mail order) to set in motion the ready-to-wear revolution. Naturally enough, the manufacture of clothing in standardized sizes was first introduced in order to meet the growing needs of the armed forces as conscription became the norm in Europe. But it then moved into the area of men's clothing and finally into women's wear (starting with such items as suits and blouses, but only after much resistance reaching dresses). Changing fashions, dictated in part by new ways of life (how could you get into a car wearing an exuberantly large hat?) and in part by the cost-cutting logic of industry, did much to speed up the process. Green refers to the "seemingly inexorable trend . . . from housedresses to slacks to jeans to jogging pants."

In America, the advance of ready-to-wear clothing was celebrated as a triumph for democratization (on a Sunday in Central Park it was becoming hard to distinguish between the poor and the middle class) and this view was even shared, in the spirit of de Tocqueville, by one or two maverick French people. In general, though, the resistance in France was fierce. Women, loyal to *moyenne* and *petite couture*, stuck by their dressmakers, or their own sewing machines, through thick and thin; but it was a losing battle, and since the Second World War this last bastion of production for,

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or by, the individual has been steadily destroyed. In 1970, there were still some forty-five thousand dressmakers in France, by 1985, only six thousand.

New York long dominated the "sartorial revolution" in the United States, and it was the Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe that from the 1890s until the 1920s provided most of the men and women who made the clothes: the cutting, sewing, and pressing (tasks often broken down into many sub-units in order to increase the always frenetic speed). Similarly in France, garment manufacture provided the primary source of work for the Jewish immigrants of the inter-war period. But the ethnic—like the gender—factor was always highly fluid in this industry of endless hours and cutthroat pay during the "season" and of lack of work during the off-season.

The Jews had been preceded by the Irish and by 1905 were already being joined by Southern Italians, particularly unmarried young women. By the mid-1930s, first- and second-generation Italians constituted the largest ethnic group in the New York area (some hundred thousand out of a quarter of a million) within the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), then still known anachronistically as a "Jewish union." Ethnic replacement, moreover, was joined early by geographic mobility as manufacturing was shifted at ever shorter intervals in order to seek out lower labor costs, to escape higher taxes or to flee the unions. The logic of the market took production out of New York to Chicago or Rochester, on to the West and Southwest, and thence overseas, particularly to the Far East. And what has been true of America is by now equally true of France and of Europe generally: this is globalization at its most extreme.

And yet, on the other hand—here is the paradoxical twist in this narrative—for all the inexorability of change, of flight from the high-cost center to the low-cost periphery, a highly significant part of the women's clothing industry has actually maintained itself in New York and Paris. Looking back over a span of more than a century, the *longue durée*, what is striking is how beneath all the flux, the same cyclical patterns have recurred, preserving Seventh Avenue and *le Sentier*, if not in all their former glory, at least still in active contention, employing many tens of thousands of workers. What has made this apparently illogical development possible has been, in part, the competitive advantage provided by proximity to the fashion designers and buyers; and, in part, the ability to recruit cheap labor from one wave after another of immigration and migration. In Paris, the industry has employed Turks, Dominicans, Yugoslavs of various kinds, Armenians, Mauritians, and Pakistanis. And in the United States, African-Americans and Puerto Ricans filled the gap left in the mid-twentieth century by the anti-immigration laws. Today in both Paris and New York, Chinese immigrants have become the dominant ethnic group in the industry. Now, a century on, piece work and low pay for limitless hours of sewing, whether in the sweatshop or in the home, are back again. Or is it rather, as Green suggests, that these soul-destroying modes of production were never actually suppressed? For all the efforts of trade unions and progressive politicians to introduce order into the chaos, to control working conditions and impose sanitary regulations, the "inside-shop" never became entrenched enough to render the jobbers, contractors, and *apiéceurs* superfluous.

But, of course, while the historian can discern such long-term continuities, what the already entrenched workers saw at any given moment was that their wages were being undercut by the latest wave of newcomers desperate for any job at any price. The consequent resentment could easily undermine any sense of ethnic unity—as was graphically illustrated by the following replies given to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration of 1903 by an old-time Jewish immigrant about those of his own kind following in his footsteps. Asked to explain why he was unemployed for eight months a year while having to slave "day and night" for the rest of the time, he said that "the trade lies mostly in foreigners' hands and there are too many—and they are coming over every day." And what was to be done? "My remedy is, we should not allow them to come over." But, he was pressed, "if that had been done 13 years ago, [would not] that have stopped you?" "I would not be sorry," he replied.

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It is thus in no way surprising to find that the socialist and trade-union movements tended in the past—as they still do today—to demonstrate a kind of political schizophrenia when it comes to the issue of immigration (as indeed to that of free trade). As internationalists, they were pledged to class solidarity across frontiers; as spokesmen for the organized workers at home, they more often than not felt duty-bound to support closed-door policies. The net result has always been much confusion and inconsistency. Thus, while the American Federation of Labor (for decades led by Samuel Gompers, an immigrant from Central Europe, himself Jewish) generally favored severely restricting immigration, the ILGWU usually worked in the opposite direction. But the ILGWU from very early on in its history was accused of excessive collaboration with the bosses and—to drive home just how complex these issues were and are—in its anxiety to keep the competitive edge of the organized work force, it actually opposed the minimum wage in the 1960s.

Green does not take up the cudgels for one side or the other in this ongoing conflict between the restrictionists and their opponents. And the truth is that, as in the past, there are no easy answers now in the age of globalization regarding freedom of movement and freedom of trade. But somewhere in the subtext of *Ready-to-Wear*, it is possible to sense that the author's sympathies lie with the feverish scramble, the hustle and bustle, the sheer anarchy of the open market, even if it is based so largely on sweated labor and illegal immigration. Nor, perhaps, can anything else be expected from a historian dealing with the Jews of Eastern Europe and their fate before, during, and after the Second World War. ●

JONATHAN FRANKEL teaches Russian and Jewish studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His edited volume *Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy* has recently been published by Oxford University Press.

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Ambassador to a Private World

Vanessa Mobley

SEEING MARY PLAIN:
A LIFE OF MARY MCCARTHY
by Frances Kiernan
Norton, 2000 845 pp $35

PARTISANS:MARRIAGE, POLITICS,
AND BETRAYAL AMONG THE
NEW YORK INTELLECTUALS
by David Laskin
Simon & Schuster, 2000 319 pp $26

PASSIONATE MINDS:
WOMEN REWRITING THE WORLD
by Claudia Roth Pierpont
Knopf, 2000 298 pp $26.95

MARY MCCARTHY has vexed even the most intrepid biographers. Having told most of the really good stories herself—particularly in the volumes *How I Grew* and *Intellectual Memoirs*—she has remained not only the expert on, but the best writer of, her own life. This fact hasn't deterred two separate generations of biographers. The first group, which wrote while McCarthy was still alive, included Carol Gelderman, Carol Brightman, and Doris Grumbach, and the second, each of whom published recent books dealing in part or in whole with McCarthy's life, includes David Laskin, Frances Kiernan, and Claudia Roth Pierpont.

McCarthy's writing career, which began in 1937 with theater criticism for *Partisan Review* and continued until her death in 1989, spanned literary and political criticism, short stories, the popular novel, memoir, and journalism. Parallel to her prolific career, McCarthy led a social and domestic life widely chronicled by her and others that was shocking enough for readers to conclude that McCarthy flouted at least as many social conventions as the protagonists of her fiction. In addition to having wed four times, McCarthy spent the better part of her years as a young writer in a series of relationships with a few of the mid-century's more notable intellects: Philip Rahv, Clement Greenberg, and Edmund Wilson. Settling down later in life with men of less literary renown, she set her most popular work during the early years of her career when her legendary sexual appetite and professional ambitions were first forged.

McCarthy is best known as the author of *The Group*, a work of late-career juvenilia that brought her hundreds of thousands of readers and much-sought-after financial security. *The Group*—a novel detailing the post-college fortunes of her Vassar class of 1933—had its debut, in 1954 in the pages of *PR*, as the short story "Dottie Makes an Honest Woman of Herself." "Dottie" is the story of a naïve, eczema-plagued co-ed who is persuaded by her bohemian lover to get herself fitted for a "pessary" (diaphragm). Much like her earlier, equally well-known story "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Suit," "Dottie" shows McCarthy as a master of the socially acceptable satire. In the characters of Dottie and her beau, McCarthy composed a devastating portrait of the timorous modernity of the "new woman" and the traditional caddishness of the "new male." *The Group* can be read, as it was at the time, as a roman à clef containing just enough bracing news from the world to be original, or as a women's novel—not a novel of ideas but merely a novel of novelties. McCarthy's critics and biographers seem undone by this question of intention: was McCarthy a brilliant satirist or an accidental provocateur? In an attempt to answer this question, McCarthy is captured in the most recent biographies in the amber of her greatest public renown—as a social climber, rabid gossip, voracious consumer of male literary genius, and erratic, if productive, talent—so that the shadow cast by her reputa-

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tion as a cultural touchstone obscures the more intimate biographical drama of how she became who she was. Discussing the breadth of McCarthy's life and career is daunting given her contentiousness as a public and private figure, and yet that is why "getting it right"—preserving for the reader those places where McCarthy inserted a satiric, and original, voice into the culture—is so important.

Apart even from the influence of her writing and persona, McCarthy represents something like a last ember of literary character, an example of personality as a fusion of persona and product. The dilettantism with which she was often charged was the source of her popular genius: McCarthy was the perpetual good student at the lifelong lesson of American politics and culture. She was also an ambassador into the private world of the middle class—what men and women really said to each other, what women thought about it, and what a shift in America's private arrangements had to say about public life. Today's public intellectuals rarely provide dispatches from the home front. In an era of growing factionalization of identity and agenda, Mary McCarthy looms as a relic of a time in which the terms "national concern" and "the private life of citizens" could be broached in a single sentence.

McCarthy's was a prevailing intelligence, equally curious about questions of literary merit, the use of military force abroad, personal furnishings, and the internecine battles of the Communist Party. The suspension in which these interests was held is the key to McCarthy's appeal, and it is fittingly a phrase from a woman Kiernan identifies as one of her successors—Susan Sontag—that captures McCarthy's method. McCarthy perfected what Sontag described as a style of radical will—a private and cultural interrogation that McCarthy practiced as a habit of mind.

If McCarthy had a critical signature, it was her entertaining and relentless dismissal of what George Orwell called "the smelly little orthodoxies presently contending for our souls," and she developed it through a variety of genres throughout her career. Having earned a reputation as a contrarian theater and book critic at *PR*—where criticism was conducted under a similar sign of social accountability as politics—McCarthy moved on to memoirs, essays and novels. Legend has it that Edmund Wilson, shortly after their marriage, forced McCarthy to write fiction by locking her in a room. Although he wasn't completely successful in shifting her creative allegiances away from criticism, McCarthy's relatively unhappy experiences as a working journalist surely contributed to her motivation to concentrate on fiction, memoir, and book-length nonfiction as her career progressed. When she was unencumbered by assignment, McCarthy was free to develop a sub-genre (fiction set to resolve worldly predicaments, nonfiction with the sheen and style of fiction) to accommodate her sensibility—one that retained the aesthetic hardheadedness mastered at *Partisan Review* with a vivid public imagination that took full advantage of the artistic (and for McCarthy the free exercise of the imagination was a political act) license afforded by fiction.

McCarthy's fiction and memoirs—with a few notable exceptions, such as *Birds of America*—display an evolving mastery of style that amounts to a kind of critical breakthrough. Bringing together a uniquely American plainspokenness rooted in personal experience with a distinctly Catholic preoccupation with ethical purity, McCarthy coined her own brand of literary cosmopolitanism that produced methodical critiques dazzling with wit and force of personality. Her tone—blithe but serious—and marked in turns by stealthily accurate argument and quirky aside, has influenced at least three successive generations of writers. The apex of McCarthy's influence may be in the present moment: you don't have to read far into the trenchant satire of Dave Eggers's *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* to encounter McCarthy's influence. The contemporary paradigm of the popular writer/critic/media impresario (Eggers, David Foster Wallace, Tom Frank) who communicates through a broad range of media (journal of opinion/novel/essay) has at least some of its roots in McCarthy's example. However, to the political and literary purists of her day, McCarthy was an inconvenient writer—a political commentator unwilling to renounce rhetorical flourish as its own radical device, and a novelist so taken with the piquant sociological detail that narrative too often suffered.

In everything she wrote, McCarthy's inten-

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tion to be original was paramount, which resulted in a body of work that is at once unlike any other and, in most critics' estimation, too much like itself. For McCarthy, originality and oppositionality were indivisible. She maintained her right to contradict herself on issues of both public and personal significance as a way of preserving, and investigating, her own originality. McCarthy's allegiance to her critical agenda left her with subjects and survivors often ungrateful for the honor of serving as her material. Never thoroughly satisfied with the sturdiness of her own ability to discern good and evil, McCarthy regularly interrogated her friends, their work, and her own work. This leaves curious piecework for her biographers.

Keeping score as to exactly where and how a subject veers from the intended script of her life is a common trope of biography that displays telling limits in regard to Mary McCarthy. McCarthy's aspirations for herself were contradictory— witness her vigorous disavowal of feminism and yet her principled support of other female writers and thinkers, her rather sleepy acknowledgment of the nuts and bolts of political engagement and her trips to Hanoi in 1968 and 1972—and they can be even further confused by her literary persona's appetite for both dolorous self-examination and exalted self-mythologization. The more closely McCarthy's most recent biographers examine her life, the more they favor tidy resolutions of some of the fantastically complicated, messy, and potentially instructive implications of the personal and historical predicament that McCarthy herself examined and dramatized so well.

BIOGRAPHIES of women writers so often tend to rely on speculative back story to contradict the "official" account of their lives that it is difficult not to observe the similarities between the lives of women writers and those of political dissidents. It is the same constant worrying about the role of private will in the flow of larger events (for instance, is McCarthy's decision to marry four times a flouting of social convention or a slavish observance of it?) that reduces so many biographies of women writers to territorial maps of lands gained and lost, and rarely in equal measure. In the case of McCarthy, who was as apt to find political resonance in negotiations of the bedroom as in the public referendum, the final tally continues to prove elusive.

Perhaps this is why Frances Kiernan opted for the title *Seeing Mary Plain*. Knowing that McCarthy didn't like biography (which had the gall to traffic in the hearsay and conjecture for which McCarthy had other, perhaps more noble, uses), Kiernan has diluted her biographical authority so as to safely ensure that she will not be indicted as the kind of biographer who seeks the last word. Perhaps Kiernan is arguing both against the traditional "plot" of women's biographies and the traditional role of biography in general as one writer's creation of literary drama out of the life and work of another. The problem with *Seeing Mary Plain* is that we simply never find out. Stating in the preface that she wished to circumvent the "fait accompli" quality of the first generation of McCarthy biographies, Kiernan has chosen to bring together a chorus of voices, cutting across time, to achieve an intended effect that "is not unlike that of a novel, tracing the shape of this life, while conveying a sense of what it was like day to day." The bulk of the day-to-day observations of McCarthy's life are conveyed through excerpts from her letters, while Kiernan achieves a unified biographical voice chiefly in the brief passages in which she introduces and contextualizes McCarthy's own writings and the selections of criticism and interviews that make up the chorus of opinion. Kiernan has chosen to write a public biography that rarely hypothesizes about its subject, favoring instead a critical consensus of the opinions of McCarthy's friends, contemporaries and heirs to her influence, and failing to look for any larger design in the quality and content of the chorus's observations. The approach to McCarthy's life that Kiernan favors has all but obscured what could have been its most interesting contours. McCarthy was fiercely committed to the integrity of her life as a woman and a writer, and her career is a fascinating chronicle of just how long a feminist sensibility can survive—in deed if not name—through several different eras in American cultural and political history, but Kiernan sheds little light on this.

David Laskin's *Partisans: Marriage, Politics, and Betrayal Among the New York Intellectuals* and Claudia Roth Pierpont's *Passionate Minds:*

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Women Rewriting the World offer mini-biographies of Mary McCarthy that do little more than elaborate on the well-known historical record. Laskin's book, a group biography of the female members of the New York Intellectuals who contributed to *Partisan Review*, is largely concerned with the contradictions between the feminist aspirations of McCarthy and her peers and their rather traditional social arrangements. Laskin appears to think that a recitation of the number of births, deaths, affairs and fallings out experienced by this group will amount to a history significant enough to add nuance to the already well-chronicled story of these women's careers. The failures of this method are clear. By treating the lives of McCarthy, Jean Stafford, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Caroline Gordon as curiosities, he is unable either to account for their success in their time or translate the importance of their lives for today's readers.

Pierpont's *Women Rewriting the World* contains a more fluent, if no more innovative, discussion of one chapter in McCarthy's life: her friendship with Hannah Arendt. The book is an eclectic appreciation of modern women writers who re-imagined social and literary conventions, and the chapter on McCarthy and Arendt retreads the familiar ground of hypothesis about what they had in common and how their friendship flourished. McCarthy's friendship with Arendt is often cited as the sole evidence of McCarthy's gravitas. Pierpont's portrait of the two confirms this impression, describing how the flow of inspiration moved from Arendt to McCarthy, and rarely in the other direction save for McCarthy's expert advice to Arendt about how best to weather her husband's infidelity. Even "The Hue and Cry," McCarthy's defense of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which was published in *Partisan Review* the same year that McCarthy's *The Group* received its own nearly career-devastating reviews, is regarded by Pierpont as "in parts so morally devastating and in other parts so clumsy" that the dynamic between McCarthy and Arendt—two contrarian women thinkers arguing in defense of each other's right to challenge comfortable orthodoxies (with all due acknowledgment of the difference in scale)—is lost.

All three biographies seem to have been written without benefit of the wisdom, and the failings, of earlier McCarthy biographies. Save for a brief recitation of the contretemps between McCarthy and Doris Grumbach over the interviews that would form *The Company She Kept* (the first McCarthy biography), Kiernan fails to provide either a historical account of McCarthy's legacy or her own critical gloss for the judgments of McCarthy heaped upon her by her circle. Kiernan's intentions are, as she declares to the reader, to create a portrait of McCarthy that "might have made her crinkle her eyes and grin." Such bonhomie on the part of a biographer is not uncommon; what is striking about Kiernan's preamble is that it is one of the few places where she makes her intentions and her feelings about McCarthy known. Having made a vow to the reader to remain faithful to a conception of McCarthy that she herself would recognize and even enjoy, and having succeeded in the almost penitential act of refraining from excessive commentary or speculation, Kiernan fails to mention that the task of posthumously pleasing her subject, in any but the most coyly rhetorical way, is, of course, impossible or at the very least impossible to substantiate.

What is really missing from the new generation of McCarthy biographies are new facts and a new synthesis about what McCarthy's life meant to the culture of her time and what her life could mean to readers now. The absence of a new critical take on her life is particularly regrettable, for McCarthy, a writer whose veneration of the critical encounter between writer and subject was at the center of her inimitable prose style. Having chosen to favor the opinions and impressions of McCarthy's peers, her correspondence, and excerpts from her work, over a critical and historical synthesis, Kiernan has provided a quaint picture of a writer who, in life, took exception to the sort of historical myopia that Kiernan confuses for biographical intimacy. *Seeing Mary Plain* is less a biography than a kind of biographical happening for which the biographer's signature contribution is a tightly edited guest list. It is ironic that Mary McCarthy, for whom deep engagement with a subject was synonymous with combat, would be the recipient of this dubious honor. ●

VANESSA MOBLEY is an editor at Basic Books.

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In Praise of Grassroots

Editors:

In the Summer 2000 issue of *Dissent*, Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens engage in a timely and entertaining debate over globalization ("Is Globalization Americanization?") Unfortunately, the authors' conclusion that "grassroots" globalization is an uncertain answer to the problems faced today begs the question: who will be the agents of social change? Presumably, we must read their new book to find out. "Real" politics, at least in the realm of social change, has only come from below. Enfranchisement, antiwar, civil rights, environmental, and the "Old" Left or "workers'" movements have all experienced varying degrees of success because women and men have placed their bodies in the gears of oppressive structural machines. Rarely, if ever, is the cause of human emancipation advanced due to the benevolence of a gracious management. I would have liked Hutton and Giddens to infuse their argument with the concept of responsibility. Disregarding the postmodern notion that emancipation is a false construct, real politics ought to be about the reduction of human suffering, not the role of "Western" nations. Giddens's argument is suspiciously similar to Adam Smith's "invisible hand" analogy insofar as he seems unwilling to place blame or responsibility for the extreme disparity that is the hallmark of globalization. This unwillingness to judge is inherently un-political and too easily becomes an excuse for continued injustice around the world. Decisions based upon the invisible hand are proven to be much more calculated when, as Hutton points out, although the Americans did not design the crisis, "they did benefit hugely." The question of whether the forces of globalization are inherently "American" or "Western" is interesting only at the point when it leads to a discussion of responsibility. If the Western/industrial nations are accumulating the vast majority of the wealth, then shouldn't those same nations do something to ease suffering and increase human dignity?

I applaud the authors for their attempt to reframe the debate on globalization. However, if the cold warriors still dominate international relations within the nation-state framework, then the problems of globalization ought to be couched in a language of threat construction. Global poverty, global environmental degradation, and global arms sales are all issues that represent threats to global security. As loathsome as it may be to bring up the subject of global order, wouldn't it increase human dignity if the notions of "order and security" meant ending worldwide poverty, hunger, and environmental destruction? As the worldwide protests against the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund have shown, radical activists armed with puppets, PVC arm locks, rocks, and slogans dramatically help to keep the issue of responsibility on the international agenda. Would the recent IMF debates in Prague have been so concerned with the fact that three billion people live off of two dollars or less a day if protesters around the world had not rallied? What, I wonder, do Hutton and Giddens think the international community ought to consist of, if not grassroots organizations?

AMENTAHRU WAHLRAB
Normal, Illinois

School Choice

Editors:

Amy Gutmann ("What Does School Choice Mean?", *Dissent*, Summer 2000) properly opposes vouchers as a way out of the failures of inner-city schools. But something must be added. Since a voucher cannot reasonably cover the tuition of most private schools, it follows that such vouchers will be an unnecessary subsidy for the wealthy, a modest help for the working poor, and of no use to the poor, unless they result in the less than welcome development of educational Medicaid mills.

But something more must be added. Behind the degradation of the inner-city schools lies the degradation of the inner cities themselves, and for that we must look at deindustrialization, the disappearance of any solid employment future for the people involved, with widespread social decay as a consequence. Fixing that means re-industrialization: in short, protectionism, at least in terms of the bread-and-butter products of everyday life, if not of specialty products.

JOSEPH M. DIAMOND
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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Growing Together?

Editors:

As the adviser of *Crossing Swords*, I was delighted with Marshall Berman's compelling article "Crossing Swords: Trees Growing in Brooklyn" (*Dissent*, Fall 2000). By reading our journal so thoroughly, and commenting on it at such length, he demonstrates much more interest and sensitivity toward students as social, thinking, beings than too many administrators and supervisors who view students through the restrictive prism of test scores. However, in spite of his alluring title, I wonder if, by failing to explicate *Crossing Swords*' dialectical—"Jaytalking," if you will—nature, he may not have overlooked the crux of the journal, namely its "promise of possibility" by his reductionist approach, which "celebrated" inner-city pathologies: sex, violence, drugs, failure, and so on. Indeed, it was the "bouncing out" of a principal in October 1998 that paved the way for the destabilization of the school that arose more from the concerted antics of the Board of Education (four principals in a one-year period mid-October 1998 to October 1999!) than from "gangs from the streets."

Though Berman is on target about "kids choos(ing) life by turning to each other," he overplays sexual intercourse to the exclusion of the lively discourse and metacognition spawned by students critically engaging each other in print. Interestingly, it's the very "dialogue and discovery"—not unlike *Dissent*'s Symposiums, Arguments, Reconsiderations—that not only provide an avenue for students to go beyond their partial truths but, more important, put them on the road to becoming lifelong autonomous learners committed to imagining and constructing a more humane world. Notwithstanding these minor concerns, the collective of students, parents, and the community-at-large that sustained the publication are elated by the timely and comprehensive exposition on our journal, one that attempts, on the high school level, what *Transition* evinces—"a grand effort to synthesize 'the incompatible, the disparate, and letting them grow together.'" (*Dissent*, Spring 1999, pp. 99-104)

Winthrop Holder
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Percentage Rises

Editors:

I agree with Maxine Phillips ("The Last Page," *Dissent*, Fall 2000) that good public schools need advocates. However, I question the accuracy and fairness of what she has to say about the proposed Columbia University school. Citing an article in the *New York Times*, Phillips accuses Columbia of neglecting the surrounding community and its public schools. Gardner P. Dunnan, who is Columbia University assistant provost for special projects and one of the prime movers behind the school, has said that 50 percent of the student body will be drawn from the community. According to a June 2000 working draft of a mission statement for the school that Dunnan made available to me, the school intends to serve as a "research and development lab" for local public schools.

Oliver Conant
New York, N.Y.

Maxine Phillips Replies:

I apologize for the confusion about the exact percentages, which was caused by a miscalculation from figures given in the article. Gardner Dunnan confirmed to me that indeed 50 percent of the slots would be for children of community residents, and that need-based scholarships for community residents would be available. He pointed out that Columbia University is working with School District 3 to offer access to and training for new media resources and has submitted a proposal to form a partnership with a local public school. He anticipates that the proposed elementary school on 110th Street will be a "portal for university resources to public schools." The larger question raised in my article of commitment to public education as an ideal remains. The concrete question of when and how Columbia will construct its twelve-story building is being hammered out at community meetings in the neighborhood.

To Letter Writers

- *We welcome succinct letters from our readers. But because we have a long "lead time" for each issue, you have to send us your letter within three weeks of getting an issue of* Dissent *in order to get it into the next issue.*

- *Letters must be no more than 500 words, typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. We are unable to acknowledge letters. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. We accept E-mail submissions to editors@dissentmagazine.org.*

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A FEW MONTHS before the ugliest American election in recent history, more than fifty people gathered in a park for a potluck lunch and discussion about what real democracy would look like at the local, national, and international levels. Some got up early to make special dishes—homemade casseroles, homegrown-tomato salads. A few teenagers brought their friends. Many workers took a long lunch break. The crowd was slightly larger than usual because of the few out-of-town guests, but otherwise this was a regular Monday gathering in Manhattan. Manhattan, Kansas.

This Manhattan sits bull's-eye in the middle of the country. Surrounded by corn fields, filled with fundamentalist Christians, and made up of squat, one-story houses, it's home to the agricultural branch of the state university. It doesn't feel like a "college town," though; no cafés or nightclubs, no cozy bookstores. The Monday potluck is sponsored by the Manhattan Peace and Justice Society, a committed group of more than seventy-five people, many of whom have been working for progressive causes for over thirty years.

I visited Kansas last summer as part of Democracy in Motion, a "road show" of educators and organizers who drove from New York City to Los Angeles in a '74 Eagle converted tour bus named Mabel. Our goal was to share information about the growing movement against corporate globalization and to encourage local organizing and coalition building. We traveled to places that might have missed other tours: medium-sized cities and small towns that—until this trip—I would have thought were in the middle of nowhere. "It's so flat," I commented, when we stopped on the fourth day at a gas station in the middle of a wheat field. "No, it's actually not," said one of my traveling companions, a Vietnamese-American woman who grew up in Oklahoma. I looked around again, she was right. The wheat fields rolled and dipped in a way that I could never find in the forcibly flattened and paved streets of New York City. Similarly, there was an unexpected diversity to the crowds we met. At one stop in Kansas City, I found myself sitting between a church secretary and an anarchist. Only some of the crowds were mixed ethnically, but everywhere I encountered a variety of life stories and beliefs that I seldom find at community events in my more-celebrated Manhattan. In Denver, Colorado, native women march daily to save their low-income housing. In Kansas City, Missouri, a group of older women stand by the highway every week, holding signs expressing their hopes for peace. Throughout our trip, I found these and many more examples of politics as daily practice. During one of our conversations, a man in Kansas City apologized for not knowing more about the history of democratic protest: "I've only recently emerged from my trance," he said. Imagine someone in New York so easily acknowledging that there is more to learn.

In Salt Lake City, I met with a coalition of longtime environmental activists, local unions, native rights groups, and committed democratic socialists and anarchists, augmented by an odd assortment of left/progressive folks. Together, with bright spirits and without acrimony, we planned a meal, discussion, twelve workshops, a march, rally, and skit. When I commented on this rare harmony, one man shrugged. "Out here," he said, his gaze taking in the huge Mormon temple, the twelve-story electric-company office, the hills, and the desert, "we know who are enemies are. We don't waste time fighting with our friends." Back among the skyscrapers of my Manhattan, I wonder how to create the solidarity I found in more isolated areas. How can we build tight communities that also have space for our immense cultural and personal diversity? Manhattan, Kansas, is a reminder of the need for a politics that is more than a string of victories, defeats, and arguments. To paraphrase the Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton, we need politics like bread. Sustaining. Nourishing. Steady work.

RACHEL NEUMANN

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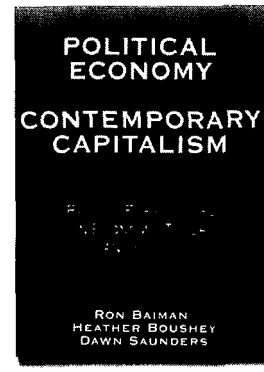

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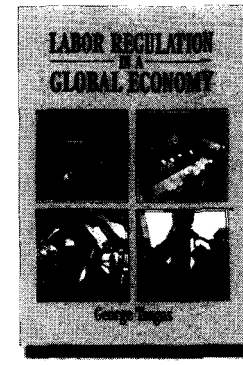

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